

## **NEW PROGRAM INCREASES COMMUNITY CARE, REDUCING HOSPITAL STAYS**

The government will deliver improved health care for veterans and war widows and reduce unnecessary hospital stays through a new \$152.7 million investment announced in the Budget.

The *Preventable Admissions and Improved Community Care Program* will increase community-based support for veterans and war widows who have chronic conditions and complex care needs and are at risk of hospitalisation.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, said that new payments would be available to Local Medical Officers (LMOs) to better coordinate and oversee health care for veterans and war widows targeted by this new initiative. The government expects up to 17,000 veterans will benefit from the initiative.

"This initiative will provide real support to members of our Second World War generation in their twilight years.

"In many cases, there is no need for someone to end up sick enough to go to hospital. There is evidence that many of these stays would not be needed if there was better coordination of care and support for them in the community.

"Being admitted to hospital can be very stressful, especially for older patients. This program aims to reduce unnecessary hospital stays by focusing on better community-based care and helping with the self-management of chronic conditions," Mr Griffin said.

This announcement builds on the firm relationship that already exists between veterans and their LMOs. LMOs will receive new payments for preparing and implementing care plans, including coordinating care for veterans participating in the initiative.

A practice or community nurse will support the veteran including:

- coordinating appointments with other health professionals involved in their care
- providing an appointment reminder
- undertaking home visits
- assisting with medication management and treatments
- assisting the patient to self-monitor his or her condition.

The new program will target those with one or more of up to five chronic conditions. These are congestive heart failure, coronary artery disease, pneumonia, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and diabetes.

As part of the package, \$28 million will be spent on an expansion of the Veterans' Home Care Program to introduce a new service to target older, more frail veterans most at risk of unnecessary hospitalisation.

"This will increase home-based services for our frailest veterans to try and keep them healthier so they can spend more quality time at home and less time in hospital," Mr Griffin said.

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