

## **AGED CARE CAN'T WAIT**

Doutta Galla Aged Services ("Douta Galla") has welcomed the recommendations outlined in the Productivity Commission's *Caring for Older Australians* final report released today. Doutta Galla CEO, Mark Anderson said the government needs to begin implementing the proposed recommendations immediately to ensure the aged care system is prepared for Australia's ageing population.

"Julia Gillard promised to focus on aged care reform in the second term of government but we simply can't wait until after 2013.

"The government has taken small steps in the right direction with the introduction of a national aged care phone service and better access to interpreters. Now we need deeper structural reform, and it's needed now," he said.

A not-for-profit group, Doutta Galla operates predominantly in Melbourne's west. Mr Anderson said, in an aged care system that is currently unsustainable, it is often the poorer neighbourhoods that suffer most.

"Melbourne's western suburbs are home to a population that is culturally diverse, and has among the lowest annual incomes in Australia. Diversity will increase significantly in the coming years.

"The current bond system is not working. Providers in wealthier metro regions regularly accept residents with individual bonds of \$1 million, providing critical funding for use in cross subsidising supported or non-bond paying residents. Such bonds are extremely rare in Melbourne's west where the cost of care is often higher due to diverse needs and the low availability of experienced staff," he said.

Doutta Galla is pleased the Productivity Commission recognises that costs associated with catering for diversity, such as language services and staff development, need to be considered when recommending the scheduled set of prices for care services.

"Residents' ability to communicate needs and preferences to aged care staff and health professionals, and to be able to participate in social cultural activities, is essential for the wellbeing of all our residents," Mr Anderson said.

Doutta Galla welcomed the recommendation for accommodation bonds to be allowed for all care levels with prices charged for accommodation in residential facilities reflecting the cost of supply.

"We are pleased to see that while the commission is recommending that those who can afford to pay will do so, there is also a safety net in place for less privileged residents," Mr Anderson said.

"The release of the final report is one step closer for a fairer and more accessible aged care system for older residents living in Melbourne's western suburbs.

"We urge the government to begin introducing the commission's recommendations this year," he said.

*Doutta Galla Aged Services is a not-for-profit aged care provider, operating nine high and low care residential facilities and independent living unit complexes in Melbourne and regional Victoria. It was established in 1991 to meet demand for aged care in Melbourne's west. Every Doutta Galla facility is fully accredited.*

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**For more information, please contact:**

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