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RUSH TO SECURE GOVERNMENT FUNDED HOME CARE FOR THE MID NORTH COAST

In 2015 the Federal Government announced major changes to the way our elderly and less able Australians access Government subsidised Home Care services.

These changes will come into effect on February 27, 2017 and mean that there will no longer be a guarantee that our elderly and less able individuals on the Mid North Coast will be able to immediately access Government funded Home Care in the future.

Bundaleer Care Services Chief Executive Officer, Gareth Norman explains, “Currently, packages and funding are secured by applying to enter a Home Care agreement from a nominated provider in your area, like Bundaleer. However, with this new system everyone eligible for, but yet to take up a Home Care package will instead go on to a national list managed by the Federal Government’s My Aged Care website”.

Individuals would then be contacted by the Government when a suitable package becomes available. What’s important to understand is the reality that there will be no limit to how long this process may take because the time you wait before you are assigned a Government subsidised Home Care package is based on your needs and circumstances, coupled with the amount of time you have spent on a waiting list – which will then be assessed against the needs, circumstances and waiting time of your peers nationally”.

Mr Norman continues “and while there is currently funding for Home Care packages allocated specifically to Mid North Coast residents, there is no guarantee as to the proportion of funding to be allocated for Mid North Coast residents entering Government subsidised Home Care after February 27. The funding may instead go to residents in other regions or States whose care needs may be deemed by the Federal Government to be higher.

To avoid missing out anyone already eligible for a home care package should secure their package and elect to receive services before the changes come into effect on February 27, 2017.”

Mr Norman is also quick to stress that in the instance where Government subsidised Home Care packages were not available, providers such as Bundaleer would continue to provide Home Care on a fee-for-service arrangement.

“Under no circumstances should getting older mean that you have to stop making the decisions on how you live your life – regardless of who is paying the bill. That’s where providers like Bundaleer can make a big difference.

It may well be that one of our clients is managing the demands of maintaining their home quite well and just needs a bit of help around the house with gardening, laundry, shopping or meal preparation. And it

may be that another client isn't coping as well and needs a higher level of support in order to stay in their own home, so we help them with medication management, showering and eating meals.

Regardless, the reality is that over time circumstances may change. What's important is that a Home Care provider is able to change with these circumstances, providing products and services wherever and whenever needed.

Bundaleer can manage this all for their clients and are also able to offer a competitive fee for service program tailored to the needs of each resident. A program with a real community feel employing locals, to take care of locals – so these people understand each other almost like extended family” says Mr Norman.

This is particularly relevant given another significant change also effective February 27. Consumers will continue to have the opportunity to choose a provider like Bundaleer for their Home Care needs and can direct their package funds accordingly via the My Aged Care website. However the changes dictate that the funding for every Home Care Package will now stay with the consumer, whereas they used to stay with the Provider.

What this means is that if a client moves from the Mid North Coast to Sydney, the money they were spending from their Home Care package that was going back into the Mid North Coast community – then moves to Sydney, and there may not necessarily be a Government subsidised position made available for another client as a replacement on the Mid North Coast – so essentially the Community as a whole misses out.

And with the Government reducing the red tape and regulation for all Home Care providers from February 27, Mr Norman cautions all Mid North Coast residents who choose this option to do their due diligence to ensure anyone they engage to do any work for them is fully qualified and insured to protect themselves.

“Bundaleer is a great choice in Home Care because as a community organisation we source the best staff from the local community and we proudly guarantee the qualifications, commitment and dedication of all our staff and we know they are not only capable of doing an amazing job, but that they will also treat all our clients with the utmost respect, dignity and care so that they can continue living happily and safely in the comfort of their own home.”

See below for a complete overview of the changes to Home Care from February 2017 Planning & Allocation

- Funding for a Home Care Package will follow the consumer, allowing them to choose a provider that suits them and direct the funding to that provider.
- No ACAR for Home Care. This will significantly reduce red tape and regulation for providers. The 2015 ACAR was the last round where home care places were allocated to providers.
- Home Care Packages will be made available to consumers periodically throughout the year.

Portability of Home Care Packages

- All consumers—both new & existing—will be able to change Home Care providers if they wish.
- Any unused funds will move with the consumer to the new Home Care provider. If a consumer leaves home care, any unused funds will be paid back to the Government and to the consumer – either directly to them or their estate. Exact amounts are determined on a case by case basis.

Prioritisation of Consumers

- A consistent national system will be introduced to assign home care packages to eligible consumers.
- The prioritisation process will take into account the needs and circumstances of eligible consumers and the time spent waiting for care.

Approved Home Care Provider Requirements

- The criteria for becoming an approved home care provider will be streamlined, with a greater focus on the organisation as a whole. All approved providers must continue to meet quality review and accreditation standards.
- Existing providers of residential care will have the opportunity to opt-in to become an approved home care provider – through a simplified process rather than a full application.
- Approved provider status will no longer expire after two years if the provider does not hold an allocation of places.

Other changes:

- A consumer will be able to be approved by an Aged Care Assessment Team/Service (ACAT/ACAS) as eligible for more than one type of care at the same time.
- ACAT/ACAS assessments will continue to determine the eligibility for accessing a Home Care Package, but approval will be given at a specific package level (1, 2, 3 or 4) rather than the current level 1/2 (low level care needs) and level 3/4 (high level care needs) approach.
- There will be some minor changes to ensure consistency in the factors to be considered in determining a consumer's eligibility across all care types.

No changes:

- There will be no changes to the current home care fee arrangements.
- Home Care Packages will continue to be delivered on a Consumer Directed Care basis but consumers will have greater choice regarding their home care provider.
- The total number of Home Care Packages available will continue to be capped in line with the aged care planning ratio set by the government.
- Funding will continue to be paid directly to an approved home care provider.

Media Enquiries - for any questions or to organise an interview with Gareth Norman, CEO of Bundaleer Care Services please call Beth on 02 6585 2811.