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**PRESS RELEASE**  
**For immediate release**

### **Changes to Aged Care Assessment Teams will have a negative impact on the care of older Australians**

The Australian and New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine (ANZSGM), a peak body of geriatricians in the care of older people is calling on the Federal Government to reconsider its proposed changes to Aged Care Assessment arrangements due to be implemented from April 2021.

Aged Care Assessments are an older person's first step in accessing the psychological and clinical assessments required in order to access home or residential aged care. Under the Government's planned changes, the process will merge two assessment workforces currently operating independently - Regional Assessment Service who assess need and Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACATS) who assess eligibility for services.

*"These changes will have a significant detrimental impact on the care of the most vulnerable older Australians and their access to high quality expert care by limiting any meaningful involvement of geriatricians along with specialist nursing and allied health services in this process,"* said ANZSGM President Dr John Maddison.

ACATs are currently embedded in multidisciplinary regional geriatric medicine departments and provide an important point in an older person's health care journey that includes ready access to a geriatrician. Contributing to the care of older people in residential care remains an important part of both the practice of geriatric medicine<sup>1</sup> and teaching of geriatric medicine<sup>2</sup>. There is strong evidence to support that the involvement of a geriatrician in delivering care in patients' homes or residential aged care remains both clinically effective<sup>3</sup> and cost effective<sup>4</sup>.

While the Federal Government claims that the new aged care assessment arrangements for older Australians will link them more efficiently with services that will meet their care needs, it is clear that the changes serve to support the management of its own aged care programs as it removes ACATS from the states and territories and replaces them with privately operated services. The recently released Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety Interim Report has offered a critical

<sup>1</sup> Obeid, J. "Definition of a Geriatrician" accessed at [www.anzsgm.org/posstate.asp](http://www.anzsgm.org/posstate.asp) on 7th October 2019

<sup>2</sup> Geriatric Medicine Advanced Training Curriculum. Royal Australasian College of Physicians. Revised 2013

<sup>3</sup> Caplan, GA et al. A randomized, controlled trial of comprehensive geriatric assessment and multidisciplinary intervention after discharge of the elderly from the emergency department – the DEED II study. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*. 2004; 52(9):1417-23

<sup>4</sup> Cordato, NJ et al. Management of Nursing Home Residents Following Acute Hospitalization: Efficacy of the "Regular Early Assessment Post-Discharge (REAP)" Intervention. *JAMDA* 19 (2018) 276.e11e276.e19

appraisal of the ongoing privatisation of aged care services in an already dysfunctional aged care system.

*“Privatisation will greatly risk de-skill the assessment workforce through loss of clinical expertise and knowledge and it will threaten the availability of expertise in assessing aged-care recipients.*

*“This system has operated effectively for over 30 years, and the proposed new service will be an enormous step backwards for the delivery of care for older Australians, we urge the Federal Government to reconsider their decision,”* said Dr Maddison.

**-ENDS-**

**For more information please contact:**

Jo Dunlop  
Communications and Advocacy Officer  
ANZSGM  
Mobile: 0415328895  
Email: [communications@anzsgm.org](mailto:communications@anzsgm.org)

***Australian and New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine (ANZSGM)***

*The ANZSGM represents geriatricians and medical professionals who strive to provide the best possible health care and support for older people, working to improve their quality of life and well-being.*

*The Society has over 1,000 members in Australia and New Zealand who work across all healthcare settings and are experts in managing the complex medical and related problems faced by older people. We treat many conditions common to older people, and through professional assessment and tailored intervention support older people to maintain their independence and remain at home.*

*We contribute to maintaining a specialised skilled workforce to meet the future needs and challenges of a rapidly ageing population. We advocate for improvements to policy and social attitudes to recognise older people as valued members of our society.*

To find out more visit: <http://www.anzsgm.org/>