

As we know, aged care was the centrepiece of the federal budget brought down by the Treasurer only two weeks ago, with a \$17.7 billion reform package. Today I wish to give credit to the residents of the Sunshine Coast, especially older residents, for the role they have played in what has turned out to be a multiyear process that has brought us to where we are today with respect to aged care. Indeed, those same people will be lent on as we move forward.

It was 8 October 2019 when the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety was established. In the lead-up to the establishment of the royal commission, I called on constituents in my seat of Fairfax to provide input into the commission's terms of reference. True to form, they provided input, which was passed on through the minister to inform the creation of those terms of reference. Then, upon the royal commission's having been established, and together with my fantastic seniors advisory committee, I hosted three forums across my electorate to gather input that would form part of an electorate submission to the royal commission. There was a forum with the operators of aged-care facilities, a forum with the workers and staff members of such facilities and another forum with families and loved ones of residents of the facilities. The forums, together with a bunch of other discussions and meetings, involved well over 120 people and led to an enormous amount of input. There were some people, as you can imagine, who weren't comfortable speaking in a forum environment and speaking openly, so my staff and I also had multiple one-on-one discussions.

The consultation led to a submission of 20 pages on behalf of the electorate of Fairfax to the royal commission. The submission expressed the views of those with whom I had met and included recommendations on the need to improve the availability of service packages and on providing different and more sustainable models of care, and recommendations relating to staffing and governance issues. The royal commission presented its report to the Governor-General on 26 February this year.

The themes of the royal commission's recommendations echoed many of those that came from my electorate of Fairfax, in particular those in chapters 4, 6, 12, 13 and 40, which focused on, among other things, program design and the need for more home-care packages, the need for more sustainable models of care and accommodation and the need for more support for workforce development. Those recommendations of the royal commission have in turn informed the unprecedented aged-care reform package that we saw announced in the budget only two weeks ago. It is a package of \$17.7 billion, which includes additional home-care packages, an increase in frontline care, and support for providers to deliver better care services, especially for more vulnerable senior citizens.

It would be gilding the lily somewhat to suggest it was solely the input of the residents of the Sunshine Coast that led us to this \$17.7 billion package. Nevertheless, I do wish to pay tribute to those who provided input. It's a wonderful reminder of the power of democracy, of grassroots representation, where those who have the experience and knowledge can provide their input and that there's a process in place that allows that input to go through to a royal commission and its recommendations and, eventually, into a federal budget with a record amount of spending. As we move forward, not only do we need to ensure the effective implementation of the suite of measures from the government but we need to remember that the responsibility to show respect and dignity to senior Australians is one carried not just by government but by each and every one of us, each and every Australian caring for our older citizens.