



For immediate release January 23, 2026

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY:

BUCK-PASSING OVER AGED CARE CLOSURE WILL LEAVE OLDER TASMANIANS STRANDED

Speakers: Emily Shepherd, Secretary ANMF Tasmanian Branch;
Brigid Wilkinson, CEO Council on the Ageing, (COTA) Tasmania

Where: ANMF Office, 182 Macquarie Street, Hobart

When: 2:30 pm, Friday, January 23

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch (ANMF) and Council on the Ageing, (COTA Tasmania) are warning the loss of 94 residential aged care beds at Rosary Gardens in New Town will push more older Tasmanians into hospitals and lengthen already unacceptable waits for care.

ANMF Secretary Emily Shepherd and COTA Tasmania CEO Brigid Wilkinson have today raised urgent concerns with The Honourable Rebecca White, Federal Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, including the immediate impacts on residents and the broader system consequences across the south of the state.

Key concerns include:

- Certainty and support for current Rosary Gardens residents and families
- Reduced access to residential care for older Tasmanians in the south
- Longer wait times and fewer choices for families seeking placements
- Potential increased “bed-block” in hospitals while people wait for safe care options
- Greater pressure on the public hospital system as the default fallback

“The reality is Tasmania needs more aged care beds, not less,” Ms Shepherd said. “When residential beds disappear, older people don’t disappear - they end up waiting longer, often in hospital, because there’s nowhere appropriate and safe to go.”

“With over one million Australians likely to be living with dementia by 2065, the demand for high-quality residential care will only grow,” Ms Shepherd said.

Ms Wilkinson said the closure would hit families already struggling to navigate a complex system. “While residential aged care is Commonwealth-funded, the people who rely on it are Tasmanians. This is a major loss of capacity and choice, and it will compound existing delays in accessing services, including residential care.”

“Southern Cross Care may have made a business decision, but governments have a responsibility to ensure older Tasmanians aren’t left with fewer safe options. We are also concerned that last week’s announcement also means that the replacement arrangements associated with the Roy Fagan Centre at St John’s Park are no longer proceeding as originally indicated,” Ms Wilkinson said.

ANMF has advised the Assistant Minister that aged care providers had indicated interest in purchasing Rosary Gardens, but no response was received. “Regardless of who owns the site, the outcome is the same: fewer beds and more pressure on hospitals,” Ms Shepherd said.

ANMF and COTA are calling on the Assistant Minister to convene an urgent stakeholder meeting involving Bridget Archer (the State Minister for Health, Mental Health, and Wellbeing, and Minister for Ageing) Southern Cross Care management, ANMF, COTA, and resident/family representatives to ensure transparency and secure practical solutions for residents and the wider community.

“This must not become another round of government buck-passing while older Tasmanians pay the price,” Ms Wilkinson said.

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Quotes:

Emily: *“Rosary Gardens taking 94 aged care beds out of the system will have an immediate impact on older Tasmanians and their families. When residential care isn’t available, people don’t magically cope at home - they often end up waiting in hospital because there’s nowhere safe to go. This is exactly the kind of buck-passing between governments that leaves vulnerable Tasmanians paying the price. We need an urgent stakeholder meeting and a clear plan for residents and replacement capacity - now.”*

Brigid: *“These are Commonwealth-funded beds, but the people who rely on them are Tasmanians — and losing 94 places in the South means fewer options, longer waits, and more pressure on hospitals. Families are already struggling to navigate a complicated aged care system. Our message is simple: older people need certainty, transparency, and solutions - not politics. The government need to bring everyone to the table urgently, including residents and families, and put a plan in place.”*