



**Australian Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot
Minister for Mental Health, Community Services and
Senior Victorians, Ms Lisa Neville
and
Federal Member for Ballarat, Ms Catherine King**

Wednesday, 15 April, 2009

BETTER SERVICES FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS IN GRAMPIANS REGION

Federal Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot, and Minister for Mental Health, Community Services and Senior Victorians, Ms Lisa Neville, are pleased to announce today's launch of a \$2.5 million "one stop shop" to improve services for older Victorians and their carers in the Grampians region.

"This is about linking older people with the services they need such as meals on wheels and help at home so they can remain independent and in their owns as long as possible. It will help them determine what services they are eligible for and how to get them quickly," Mrs Elliot said.

The Grampians Region site -- **Direct2Care** – operated by Ballarat Health Services, is one of nine Access Point Demonstration Projects currently operating in Australia. It is also one of two in Victoria, the other having been launched in June 2008 in the Eastern Metropolitan Region.

Mrs Elliot was represented at today's launch by the Federal Member for Ballarat, Ms Catherine King .

"We believe in Governments working together to achieve the best for our people and our State," said Ms King

"Direct2Care is an example of the Australian and state governments working together to the benefit communities across Australia."

This new \$2.5 million integrated service will complement current community care arrangements in the region, helping clients and their carers to more easily navigate their way and tap into the services they need.

Ms Neville said: "The Rudd and Brumby Governments are taking action to improve the lives of seniors and their carers by investing in access centres which provide seniors and carers with access to a comprehensive range of services.

"This project is about making it simpler and easier for over 32,000 older people who live in the Grampians and their carers to access services."

The Victorian demonstration sites are being established as a part of a \$300 million Federal Government initiative and a joint commitment by the Rudd and Brumby Government to simplify the entry and assessment process for the Home and Community Care program in Victoria.

The demand for community care – and aged care generally – is growing rapidly due to Australia's unprecedented ageing population shift. People aged 65 years and over will represent more than a quarter of our population by 2051, up from around 13 per cent today.

"This is about responding to the needs and challenges of our ageing population. Australians now have the longest life expectancy in the English speaking world, surpassing the Canadians, New Zealanders, Americans and the British," Mrs Elliot said.

Direct2Care has been funded as part of the Rudd Government's and Brumby Government's commitment to Home and Community Care. Funds for the HACC Program in Victoria now total \$500 million in 2008-09. Of this, the Victorian Government contributes \$236m, which is \$60 million more than required by the HACC Agreement.

Mrs Elliot and Ms Neville said that the Rudd Government and the Brumby Government remain committed to working together to deliver further improvements and develop a simpler and fairer community care system.

"Senior Victorians have been telling us they want to live independently and to remain in their own homes for as long as possible," Mrs Elliot said.

"There are many services that can help people do this - such as home and personal care, home maintenance and meals on wheels – but it can be difficult for people to know what services are out there and whether they are eligible.

"That is where Direct2Care is so valuable, helping them to find and connect up with services that meet their individual needs.

Mrs Elliot said that the Access Point projects will be carefully monitored and reviewed to enable further improvements over time and to help determine the best model for wider implementation across Australia.

Community Care – the facts

Community care provides older Australians with the services they need to help them remain as independent as possible in their own homes, such as nursing and health care, meals on wheels, help with household chores and home modifications.

The Australian Government will provide \$2.2 billion to 2008-09 to community care. This is an increase in funding of \$260 million compared with 2007-08. It is the most significant investment in aged and community care ever made by an Australian government.

About 600,000* older Australians and their carers now receive community aged care services through a mix of programs funded by the Australian Government and the state, territory and local governments. *637,500 aged people received services through HACC alone in 2007-08 so would suggest this figure needs updating, especially if it is intended to include packaged care clients.

The largest of these is the Home and Community Care program, which will receive more than \$1.7 billion in funding from the governments in 2008-09. The Australian Government provides 60 per cent – totalling \$1.090 billion of total program funding.

For more information, contact Mrs Elliot's office on 02 6277 7280 or Ms Neville's office on 0400 512 618