



# National Aged Care Advisory Council

## Communique – 20 February 2023

The National Aged Care Advisory Council's priority focus was sustainability of the aged care sector, including smooth implementation of the Fair Work Commission Aged Care Work Value case, and ways to improve ongoing communication to the sector and consumers.

**Sector sustainability** - Council considered advice from the Department of Health and Aged Care that a series of funding uplifts will enter the system in coming months that are anticipated to have a positive effect on sector sustainability. Council noted that funding increased from 1 October 2022 and will increase further from October 2024. In addition, that the first round of IHACPA indexation will commence from 1 July 2023. Council encouraged the department to complete modelling of these cumulative funding uplifts and provide this to the sector to enhance sector confidence and support planning.

Council members suggested a series of additional measures that government could take to further reduce financial pressure on the system, including improved analysis to support sector financial planning; better understanding and managing the cumulative impact of reform; and workforce expansion.

**Implementation of the Fair Work Commission wages outcome** – Council welcomed clarity that government will meet the costs of the Fair Work Commission wages decision, including on-costs. (*Note: Council met prior to release of the final Fair Work Commission decision.*) Council is concerned that community expectations of wages increases for those on enterprise agreements may be unrealistic. Council encouraged government to share further information about how funding for the wages increase will be provided as soon as possible, to support planning.

**Communication** – Council acknowledged government efforts to communicate positive outcomes in aged care reform to the community. Council considers this could be complemented by the provision of more information about anticipated phasing of reform and timelines to help the sector's longer term planning.

**Star Ratings** – Council congratulated the government on the successful roll out of the Star Ratings system. Council welcomed the department's proposal to release quarterly national data to assist the sector to self-audit and benchmark, and to promote the adoption of best practice approaches to aged care support. Council has agreed to work with the department to include the allied health and quality of life domains in future iterations of Star Ratings. Members also suggested ways to improve the accessibility and equality of the resident experience survey, particularly for older people experiencing cognitive decline, communication difficulties, or people whose first language is not English.

**Other areas covered** - Council discussed the progress of the Support at Home reform and regulatory framework reform. Council gave input on implementation of Royal Commission recommendation 44.b which requires aged care service providers to offer volunteer programs that are coordinated, and training based. Council considered Commonwealth work, with the States and Territories, to improve the coordination of services for older people moving between home, acute hospital care, and/or residential aged care. Council also considered an update on the establishment of the Office of the Interim Inspector-General of Aged Care.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 29 March 2023.