



Communique – 20 October 2023

The Council of Elders came together virtually on 20 October 2023 to talk about a range of matters important to older people and to agree advice to the Minister for Aged Care.

Innovation in residential aged care design – Council welcomed the government’s release of the *Reimagining Where We Live* design ideas competition and the work to promote innovative design that better meets the needs of older people living in residential aged care. We encourage designers across the country to participate and engage with older people when developing their proposals.

New Aged Care Act – Council was pleased to hear that there will be a 10-week public consultation process on the exposure draft of the new Act. We encourage older people, and their families and carers, right across the country to have their say on the draft Act. We want to make sure that hard to reach and vulnerable groups, including First Nations communities, people living in residential aged care, people experiencing homelessness, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse groups, can also be heard on the Act before it is finalised. The Council will hold a dedicated discussion to give feedback on the draft consultation materials later in the year.

Workforce and safety issues – Council discussed accounts members have heard of older people receiving aged care services that are of a poor standard and/or unsafe and accounts of aged care service staff stealing from or exploiting older people.

Council strongly encourages any older person who has experienced something like this to contact the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. The Commission can help you with concerns and complaints about issues like:

- health care, for example wound care, medication and care assessment
- personal care assistance, for example showering, dispensing medication, feeding and mobility
- communication, for example how information is shared with you and how your questions are responded to, including complaints
- staff roles, for example how they do their job and provide care
- living environment, for example safety, security, and cleaning

- some fees and charges in care agreements
- choice and preferences, for example showering and meal arrangements and tailored activities.

Complaints can be lodged by [phone, in writing or online](#).

Council is working with government to make sure protections for older people are as strong as they can be. We welcome the proposed inclusion of a duty on platform providers in the new Act, to ensure they only register and supply workers who are either registered with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission to provide services in their own right, or meet the worker screening requirements. Council will continue to emphasise the importance of having ongoing oversight that workers remain eligible to deliver services.

We were encouraged to hear that the department is taking lessons on how best to balance safety and choice and control from other sectors, including the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Council had an initial discussion about work underway to introduce minimum skill requirements for people working in aged care and is looking forward to more discussions on this in 2024. We encouraged the exploration of graduated approaches to gaining required skill levels, where greater competency could be linked to higher rates of pay to encourage and reward upskilling.

Other matters – Council heard an update on the Aged Care Taskforce’s work and met with the Acting Inspector-General of Aged Care to provide advice on policy issues he is considering.

The next meeting of the Council of Elders will be held on 23 and 24 November 2023.