

# National Aged Care Advisory Council (NACAC)

## Communiqué – 4 October 2023

**2024 Priorities:** NACAC considered its forward work plan for 2024 and as part of this reflected on its achievements to date. Through its collective expertise, Council has delivered real-time advice on current contextual challenges faced by the aged care sector, while focusing on future design of the system. Council has advised on foundational, whole-of-system matters including development of the aged care reform roadmap, sector sustainability and the importance of enabling digital and data sharing platforms.

Council feedback has informed a range of policies and programs including the development of the new Support at Home Program; proposed operation of elements of the new Aged Care Act; release of Star Ratings and its implications for older people, their families, and people working in residential aged care facilities; as well as public consultation for a strengthened set of Aged Care Quality Standards. The department has drawn on Council to consider emerging issues including development of operational policy to support the 24/7 Registered Nursing requirement and implementation of the Fair Work Commission decision.

Council intends to publish a dedicated communiqué on its achievements to date in its current term.

**Reform Priorities and Progress:** Council acknowledged the significant effort of the aged care sector, government and the department to achieve the introduction of mandatory care minutes for all residential aged care facilities. Members noted it will be important to demonstrate over time how increased care minutes are resulting in improved quality of care outcomes for older people. Council reflected that 1 October 2023 marked one year since the implementation of the Australian National Aged Care Classification (AN-ACC) funding model, designed to better match funding to the costs of delivering care. Through AN-ACC, the Government has provided \$11.1 billion from 1 July 2023 to support the Fair Work Commission's decision for an award wage increase for residential aged care workers, and to cover other cost increases impacting providers since AN-ACC was implemented.

**New Aged Care Act:** Council emphasised the significance of the new Act and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting its timely consideration. Council members reflected on their recent involvement in consultations on design of the new Act, which have confirmed positive sentiment, welcoming the approach of creating a simplified, rights-based legislative framework centred on older people. Council will work to promote engagement across the sector, including dedicated support to the department on the planned communication strategy and materials. Improving reach into service providers, including board directors and aged care resident committees, will be a focus for members. Council will continue to work with the department on alignment of the new Act, regulatory reforms, and relevant issues arising from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

**Data and Digital Strategy:** Council provided input to the draft aged care data and digital strategy. Council identified areas with significant potential to achieve improved outcomes for older people, and greater system efficiency. This includes telehealth for in-home care settings, and systems that allow sharing of data during transitions between in-home care, residential care and health settings. Council supports the use of existing systems and platforms where possible, and a commitment to minimise the reporting burden on the aged care sector. Council identified opportunities to support reform objectives, including the importance of protecting the privacy of older people's personal data; government expectations around conformant digital platforms; anticipated minimum lead times for introduction of digital reforms; and the proposed evaluation approach.

**Other items discussed:** Council members on the Aged Care Taskforce provided an update on recent engagement activities.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for Thursday 16 November 2023