

National Aged Care Advisory Council (NACAC)

Communiqué – 16 November 2023

New Aged Care Act released - On 14 December 2023 government released an exposure draft of the Bill for the new Act for public consultation. The consultation will run until 16 February 2024. Members of the public and interested organisations can provide their feedback and help shape the Bill before it is introduced to Parliament in 2024. More information is available at www.health.gov.au/aged-care-act-consultation.

Allied Health: Council discussed aged care allied health related initiatives and trends in the provision of allied health services as reported by residential aged care providers in the Quarterly Financial Report. Council considered allied health use could be supported by a multidisciplinary assessment tools and model of care, using clearly articulated health and well-being outcomes that are evidence based. The approach could reflect the respective roles of the acute health and aged care systems. Council encouraged government to explore good practice examples of effective incorporation of allied health into models of care and to be mindful of the vulnerability of people living with dementia or other cognitive impairments with respect to pain management.

Workforce: Council urged government to make it easier for health professionals, for example doctors and registered nurses, to renew their registration to ease workforce pressures. Workforce is an ongoing priority for Council in 2024.

Second National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians: Council received an update on work underway to develop the second National Plan, which is being led by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department in partnership with the Department of Health and Aged Care, and states and territories. Consistency in substituted decision-making arrangements across jurisdictions was a priority for Council. Members suggested sector guidance could summarise key enduring power of attorney responsibilities and information and support provider-led training. Partnerships with the financial planning sector were also suggested to promote better advance planning about substitute decision-making. Council noted the high rates of First Nations people with public guardians appointed. Council encouraged Government to consider the value of a dedicated national plan for First Nations Elders.

Provider finances and operations - new information on My Aged Care: Council noted that from mid-February 2024, the Department will begin publishing additional financial and operational information on My Aged Care about residential care facilities and home care package providers. Council appreciated that older people and their families will be given contextual information to help them to understand the new reports. Proactive communication to older people and their families will be important.

Other matters discussed: The Data and Digital Strategy has been released for public consultation. Based on Council feedback, it includes an initiative focussed on digital and health literacy for older people.

The Department is progressing to appoint an interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner, a key recommendation of the Royal Commission. It is anticipated the Commissioner will be appointed in late 2023.

Council discussed the recent increase of covid cases in the community and in residential aged care facilities. Further communications from the Department will be sent to the sector.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for February 2024.