



# Communique – May 2024

## Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner

## The Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner Ms Andrea Kelly commenced in the role on 8 January 2024.

Commissioner Kelly is currently in her 12th week leading nation-wide consultations to hear directly from First Nations older people, families, carers, communities and providers about their experiences accessing and engaging in the aged care system.

Commissioner Kelly commenced consultations on 5 February 2024 in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. She will continue to undertake a further 7 weeks of consultation across all jurisdictions, with consultations and written submissions closing on 21 June 2024.

### Consultation activities

Commissioner Kelly has been visiting communities across Australia, ensuring there is a mix of very remote, remote, regional and urban locations. She has also been speaking with a mix of service types who provide aged care to older First Nations people.

Consultations undertaken to date include:

- Western Australia – Kimberley (Broome and Bidjardanga) and South Perth
- New South Wales – Central Western (Dubbo, Gilgandra, Walgett, Bourke and Orange); Northern (Tamworth, Walcha, Port Macquarie, Kempsey)
- Northern Territory - Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Docker River, Katherine, Nhulunbuy, Gove, Yirrkala region and Darwin
- Queensland - Brisbane, Stradbroke Island and the Gold Coast
- Tasmania - Flinders Island, Launceston, Hobart, Cygnet and Smithton
- Victoria - Shepperton, Warrnambool, Melbourne, Mitcham, Healesville, Bairnsdale and East Brunswick
- South Australia - Davenport, Flinders, Port Augusta, Whyalla, Port Adelaide and Murray Bridge.

Future consultations will include Southern Northern New South Wales, Far North Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory, Perth and surrounding communities, and conclude in the Pilbara.

Commissioner Kelly has invited feedback on two questions during these consultations:

- What changes are required to enable culturally safe, trauma-aware and healing-informed access to the aged care system for older First Nations people, carers, families and communities?

- Should there be a permanent, statutory First Nations Aged Care Commissioner? If so, what should their functions and authority be?

## Engagement activities

Commissioner Kelly has also undertaken several engagement opportunities, including presenting at the:

- First Nations Aged Care Governance Group meeting in February
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care (NATSIFAC) Program Provider Forum in Brisbane in early March
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council (NATSIAACC) Board meeting in late March
- Council of Elders meeting in late March
- National Aged Care Provider Conference in Adelaide.

Direct engagement with services supporting aged care and the sector, including but not limited to the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health, the Australian Regional and Remote Community Services and The Healing Foundation, has also occurred.

## What the Interim Commissioner has heard

Commissioner Kelly is not surprised that the community-controlled sector and organisations with long standing relationships in these communities have the solutions to deliver aged care to older First Nations people.

Some of the key themes Commissioner Kelly has heard so far from older First Nations people and the sector include:

- wait times from assessment through to service provision are taking too long
- allowing flexibility in funding models mean that care is localised and reflective of the needs of the individual
- employing staff to work in the sector is difficult due to the lack of safe and affordable accommodation for workforce, particularly in remote and very remote communities
- the importance of culture and remaining connected to Country and community is significant to the mental health and social and emotional wellbeing of older First Nations people.