



Communique 22-23 May 2024

2024-25 Federal Budget - Council members joined the National Aged Care and Advisory Council to discuss the 2024 Budget outcomes relating to ageing and aged care. Council members were pleased to see significant additional funding for aged care announced in the Budget. They acknowledged the level of investment, including the release of additional Home Care Packages, workforce reform initiatives, dementia initiatives and work on IT enhancements to support the reforms in the new Aged Care Act. Members welcomed the release of 24,100 additional Home Care Packages and endorsed the priority given to Level 3 and Level 4 packages, noting that this will go some way towards reducing waiting times. Council eagerly await further details of the response to the Aged Care Taskforce and the new Support at Home Program.

Events and Engagements - Council members shared themes they been hearing from the community, like concerns about long hospital stays for older people waiting to go home or to care facilities. They also talked about the need for more allied health workers and better dental care access.

Council members will also be participating in an initiative to connect them with residential aged care homes in their local areas. This department will assist in these visits with the goal of better enabling Council members to be a voice for aged care residents.

Evaluation of Care Minutes and 24/7 Registered Nurse measures - Council discussed how to measure and evaluate care quality for the care minutes and 24/7 registered nurse measures. Council emphasised the importance of evaluation happening at regular intervals and taking a person-centred approach, making every effort to measure quality of care and quality of life on an individual level.

Complaints handling by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission - Council discussed strategies for consideration to strengthen providers' performance, and what can help older people and their families to feel more confident about raising concerns or complaints. They emphasised the importance of addressing complaints quickly and holding providers accountable for their actions. Council was pleased to note new approaches to training of staff in the Commission's Customer Contact Centre to ensure that staff actively listen to callers, show empathy and respect, and encourage callers to feel safe to raise concerns. Members highlighted the importance of timeliness, communication and education to ensure there is widespread awareness of the role and accessibility of the Commission and the Complaints Commissioner.

Commonwealth COVID-19 Inquiry - Council members talked about the challenges faced by older Australians during the COVID-19 pandemic including fear an isolation experience by many older people. Council acknowledged the key role played by volunteers and community in supporting them in many ways. They emphasised the importance of clear public messaging and early access to testing and vaccines. The council also stressed the need to plan ahead for future emergencies and ensure that older people are adequately protected.

The next meeting of the Council of Elders will be held on 26 June 2024.