



## Communique 31 July 1 August 2024

**The Hon Kate Thwaites MP, Assistant Minister for Ageing** – Members were pleased to meet with The Hon Kate Thwaites MP, following her appointment as the Assistant Minister for Ageing, Social Security and Women. Members support a teamwork approach to important issues for older people and suggested ideas to help keep older people active and healthy, as well as to allow them to stay at home. The Council is excited about the scope of Minister Thwaites' work and looks forward to talking more with her this year.

**My Aged Care Find a Provider** – The Department shared information about finances and operations on My Aged Care, specifically the "Find a Provider" tool. Members believe it's important for older people to have clear information to help them make decisions about care. Council noted that not enough people know about the Find a Provider tool and what it offers. They suggested finding new ways to raise awareness, like using media and social media creatively and a simple one-page summary of key information (like money spent on care and activities). Council proposed the summary could be shared widely, including in libraries and at events and could also be used to help assessors, doctors, hospitals, and community groups.

**Update on the Integrated Assessment Tool** – The Council congratulated the Department on launching the Integrated Assessment Tool on 1 July 2024 and found the tool to be comprehensive. Council believes it's important to have a Single Assessment System and individual assessments should be done quickly by well-trained assessors, especially those who understand the needs of First Nations and CALD communities.

**Aged Care Data and Digital Strategy Update** – The Council was pleased to hear about the Aged Care Data and Digital Strategy launched on 4 July 2024. All members support using technology to help older people. However, they think the technology should work quietly in the background, and people need confidence that human judgment will still play the key role in care decisions. Feedback suggests focusing on how the changes will positively affect users. Trust in the system needs clear, simple, and fair information that reflects reality.

**Expansion of the Quality indicators program** – The council discussed the establishment of a Quality Indicator Program for in-home aged care and provided views from their experience and networks on the aspects of quality of life that are important to older people receiving in-home care. These include recognising the importance of continuity of support from well-trained workers; having individualised care plans that are flexible and sensitive to the needs and wishes of the individual recipient; and a focus on personal and cultural safety.

**Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner** – The Council received an update from the Interim Commissioner about her consultations and what she has learned. They support her efforts to identify the main challenges First Nations older people face in getting safe and quality aged care. The Council discussed the importance of having a permanent statutory First Nations Commissioner who sits independently to the Department supporting the need for this position to be independent and able to report to Parliament. Council suggested a review of the role after the first year, including the option that the Commissioner's role could also include broader ageing issues important to First Nations older people.

**Guidelines for closure of residential aged care homes** – Council members heard from Craig Gear (CEO of Older Persons Advocacy Network) and Tom Symondson (CEO of Aged and Community Care Providers Association) about draft good practice guidelines for closing residential aged care homes. They discussed the importance of handling closures carefully, with open communication to minimise disruption and support residents, families, and the community.