




Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care

Two large, circular Indigenous art patterns, likely Warlpiri or Pitjantjatjara, are positioned in the upper right and lower left corners. They feature concentric rings of stylized, hand-drawn shapes in orange, teal, and brown, surrounding a central yellow sun-like motif with radiating lines.

Communique – September 2024

Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner

The Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner Ms Andrea Kelly has completed her national consultations.

Between 5 February and 21 June 2024, Commissioner Kelly led an extensive national consultation process to hear from older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their families, carers, communities and providers about their experiences accessing and engaging with the aged care system.

During this time, Commissioner Kelly held more than 135 in person consultations across all jurisdictions and received 36 written submissions from individuals, community groups, organisations, and peak and representative bodies.

Commissioner Kelly will deliver a report to Government, before the end of 2024, that will make recommendations based on the feedback provided during this process.

Consultation activities

Commissioner Kelly has visited 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 Bidjadanga) 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, Toowoomba
- 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
- New South Wales - Northern (Tamworth, Walcha, Kempsey, Port Macquarie)
- Far North Queensland - (Yarrabah, Cairns, Cooktown, Wujal Wujal, Hope Vale and Torres Strait Islander (Horn Island, Thursday Island)
- New South Wales - Sydney Waterloo, Mt Druitt, Surry Hill
- Western Australia - Pilbara (Newman, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Kununurra
- Australian Capital Territory (Canberra).

Consultation key themes

- Older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still experiencing significant challenges in accessing aged care services at an equitable rate compared to the non-Indigenous population. These barriers currently occur at all points of the aged care system, from trying to find information, to assessment, to receiving supports.
- Across all communities, the Interim Commissioner heard that older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people struggle with the unnecessarily complex and lengthy process to access an assessment and then aged care services.
- Aged care policies and programs do not adequately account for the social and cultural determinants of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, or account for the ongoing impacts of colonial and intergenerational trauma.
- In relation to the introduction of a permanent Commissioner, there is broad support for a permanent, statutory Commissioner. The permanent Commissioner should focus on ensuring cultural safety and responsive aged care services where older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's cultural needs are met as they age; promoting accountability within the aged care system; and driving system-wide improvements to increase equitable access and outcomes.

Engagement activities

Since the last update in May, Commissioner Kelly has undertaken several engagement opportunities, including presenting at the:

- National Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Advocates Network of the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) in late May
- Cognitive impairment and dementia prevention Roundtable event in late June
- ARIIA Conference: Facing the Future: Living well. Ageing well. Dying well in early July
- Elder Abuse Conference in late July
- National Aged Care Alliance in August.

Commissioner Kelly also held two workshops, in May and July, with First Nations peak organisations within the Aged Care sector to further discuss the possible functions, and authority of a permanent Commissioner.

Commissioner Kelly has also been supporting individuals who have reached out to her for support including advocating on their behalf within the sector.

Next Steps

Following the formal consultation process, Commissioner Kelly has continued her community and sector engagement, to ensure that as many people as possible are able to have their voices heard and provide feedback that can help influence policy design to achieve greater access and outcomes for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This will continue to be a key focus for the Interim Commissioner.

Additionally, through the consultations and a public call for submissions Commissioner Kelly sought feedback on:

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

This feedback will be used to inform:

- Final report to be delivered to the Minister for Aged Care in second half of 2024.
- Report back to community to be released in second half of 2024.