

Transforming Aged Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Report from the Interim First
Nations Aged Care Commissioner

Community Booklet



November 2024

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Artwork and graphic design by Peta Roebuck from Tuna Blue.

Artwork title: “Koorliny on Boodja” meaning “Walking on Country”

Artist: Miranda Davis (Aunty Mandy)

Aunty Mandy is a Noonga Yorga woman from the Western Australia Wheatbelt region with family connection to Whadjuk, Wilman, Ballardong, Yued and Wardandi countries.

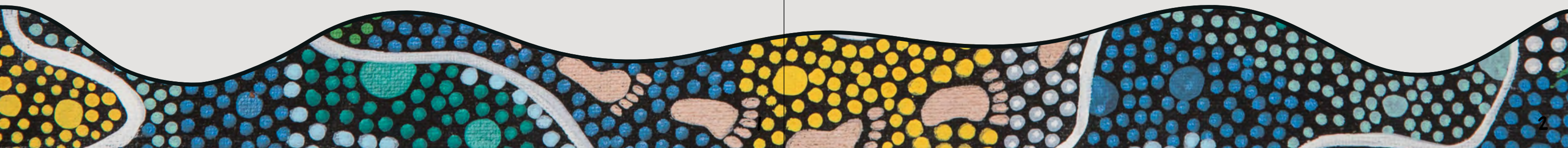
Aunty Mandy was born in Pingelly on Ballardong Country and has lived in Mandurah on Binjareb Country for the past 25 years. She lives with her husband and has 4 children and 7 grandchildren.

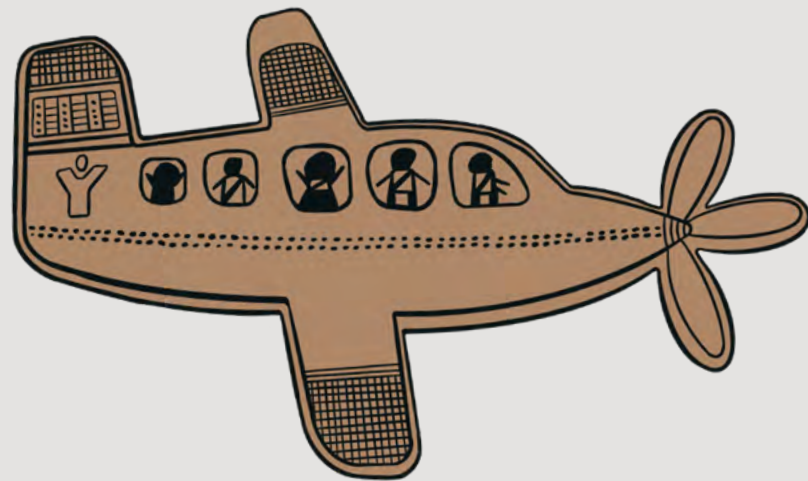
Aunty Mandy has worked extensively in the Mandurah area with local agencies to complete commissioned pieces and projects, including the Noongar Six Seasons signage for the local park in Cunderdin.

Aunty Mandy painted and gifted “Koorliny on Boodja” to the Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner in recognition of her visit to Mandurah as part of her nationwide consultations.

I acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of Country throughout what is now known as Australia, and recognise their continuing connection to land, sea, waters, and culture. I pay my respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge sovereignty was never ceded.

I particularly acknowledge the generous contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who shared their lived experiences of the aged care system. By sharing their experiences, they have provided the voice and foundation for this report. Their contributions are the evidence and momentum for change.





Purpose of this Community Report

Many of you told me about sharing your stories and experiences, but never hear anything back about how your feedback is used.

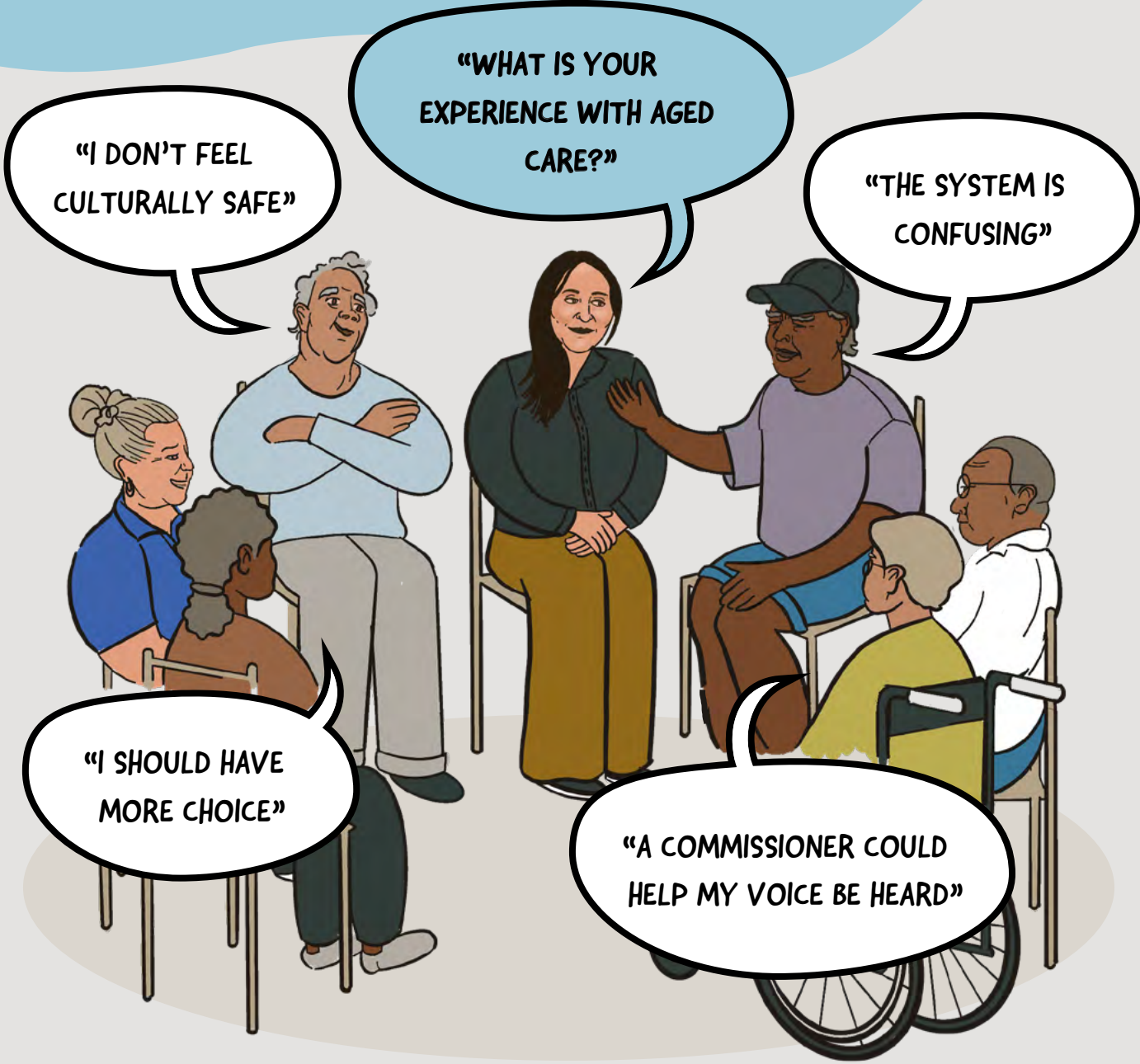
I made a promise to everybody I met with that I would come back with what I heard and not in hard-to-understand Government speak. I hope everybody who reads this Community Report connects with what is inside and that it speaks to the many different communities I met with.

Between 5 February 2024 and 21 June 2024, I travelled across the country to listen to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their families and communities, service providers and peak bodies about the aged care system and what we can do to make it better for our mob.

It was important to do this Community Report so I could share what I heard back to all of you who were so generous to meet and share your stories with me. We will only see the changes you asked for if the Government listens and understands us – so it's my hope that you see yourself in this report.



I travelled around the country to yarn with you about your experiences with aged care...



You shared what matters most to you...

Face to face support
is better for me.



At my ACCO I get all the
services I need. I only have to
organise appointments and
travel once.

We want to be cared for by
our mob. They are deeply
connected to our Country,
communities and culture.

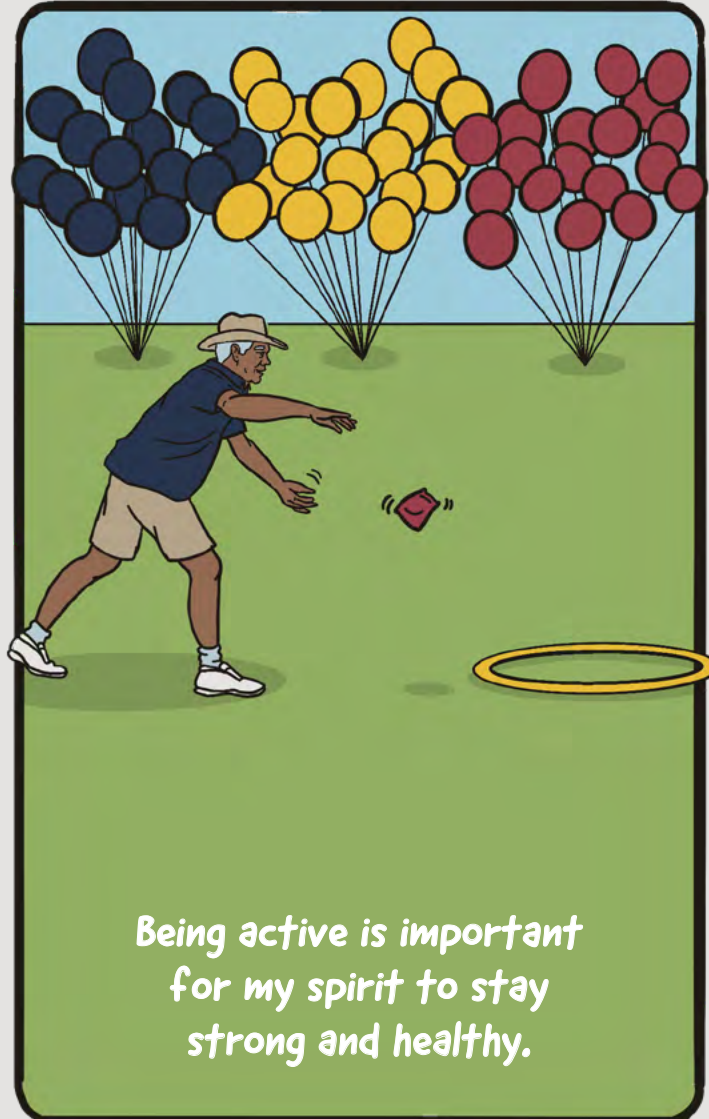
"WE KNOW WE GET
LOOKED AFTER BETTER WHEN
YOU'VE GOT MOB LOOKING
AFTER MOB"



Our Connection to Country
is so important and needs
to be supported.

You shared what matters most to you...

I can continue to live independently, stay connected to Country, community and Culture and access services that I need.



Being active is important for my spirit to stay strong and healthy.

If we have to go into residential care, they must be designed with us in mind – to honour our ancestors and our Country.



Sitting around the fire, yarning and connecting with family is good for our spirit and healing.



I also heard some of the troubles you have with aged care...

The thought of returning to an institution can be traumatizing.



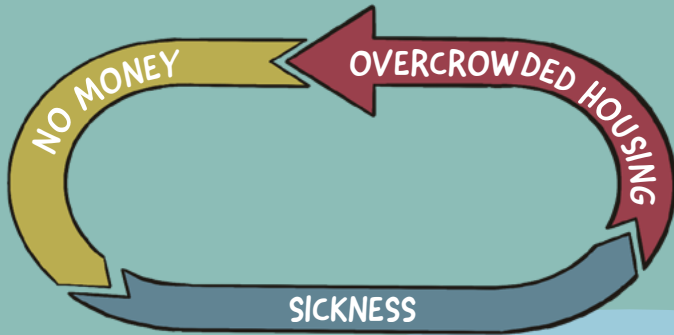
"I SPENT TOO MUCH OF MY LIFE IN AN INSTITUTION. I'M NOT GOING BACK"



"AT THE AGE OF 70, I JUST RECEIVED MY BIRTH CERTIFICATE"

The impacts are ongoing.

The intergenerational trauma impacts on dependents of Stolen Generations survivors.



"STOLEN GENERATIONS SURVIVORS HAVE UNIQUE NEEDS AND THE PEOPLE WHO ARE HELPING THEM NEED TO BE TRAINED PROPERLY"

Culturally unsafe

Assessments are culturally unsafe – they are rushed and invasive.

"RACISM HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE, BUT IT'S LIKE THE REFERENDUM GAVE THEM PERMISSION"

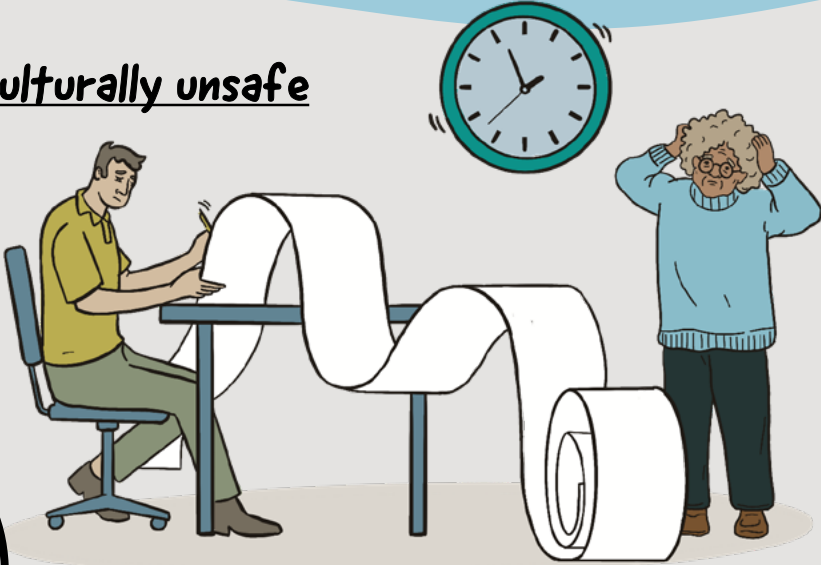
Racism exists – institutional and interpersonal.



"MY CULTURE IS ME. IT'S WHO I AM AND NO ONE CAN TAKE THAT AWAY FROM ME"

"ANDREA, I WANT YOU TO TELL THE PRIME MINISTER THAT WE WANT TO DIE ON COUNTRY"

We need a cultural safety definition and training.



Connection to Country is not understood or catered for.

I also heard some of the troubles you have with aged care...

Confusing and overwhelming

"My Aged Care" is complex, confusing and overwhelming.



"WE ARE JUMPING THROUGH MANY HOOPS TO ACCESS A SIMPLE AGED CARE PACKAGE"

Wait times for an assessment are too long, and then I have to wait even longer for a package.

Not flexible for mob

Fees and contributions make it hard for us to choose aged care services that we need, because we can't afford it.



"OUR ELDERS HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO CONTINUE GOING WITHOUT THE HELP THEY NEED TO STAY INDEPENDENT AT HOME"

Funding needs to be flexible so that we can have the services and supports we need.

"I WAS TOLD I NEED TO PICK FROM A LIST OF SERVICES TO SPEND MY PACKAGE ON. BUT IT'S NOT WHAT I NEED"



I also heard some of the troubles you have with aged care...

Lack of choice

We want more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working in aged care.

"WE NEED TO GROW THE ACCO SECTOR."

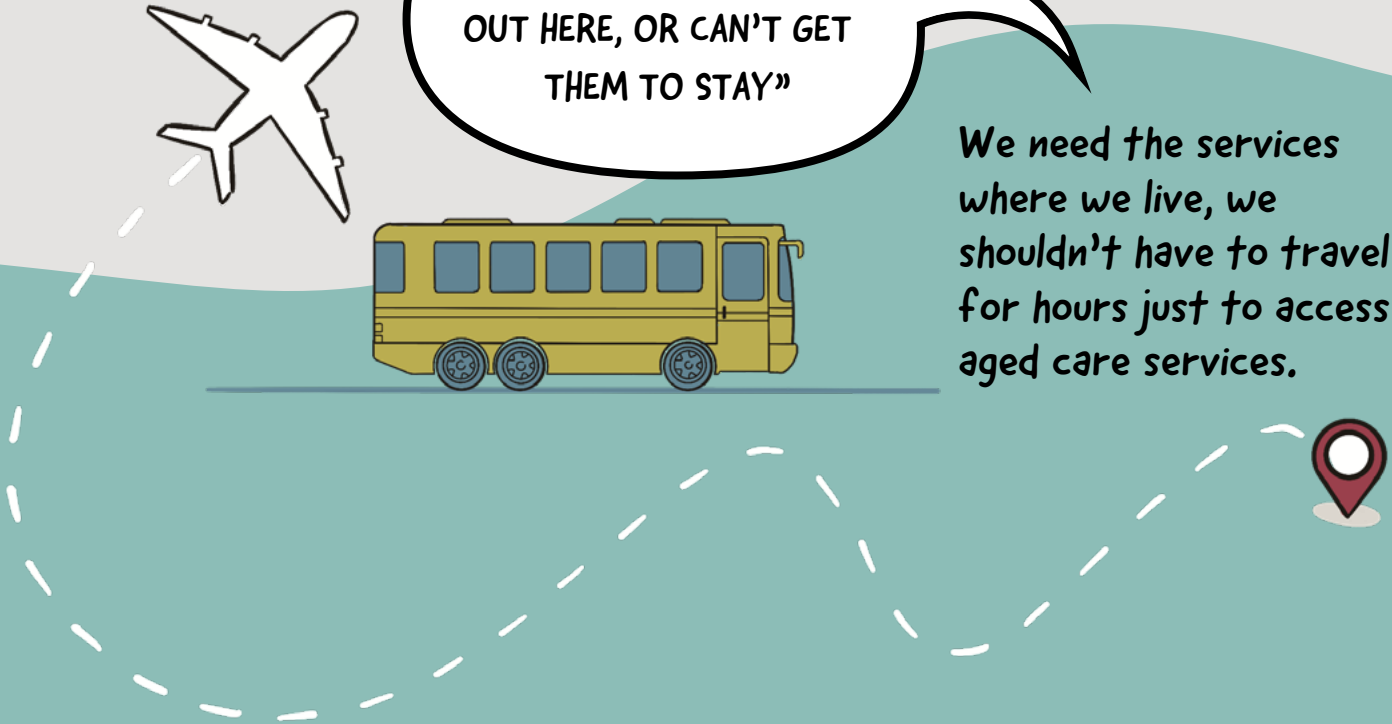
"GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO HAVE BETTER PATHWAYS FOR OUR MOB TO GET THESE CARE JOBS"



There is not enough culturally safe, trauma-aware and healing informed services for mob to choose.

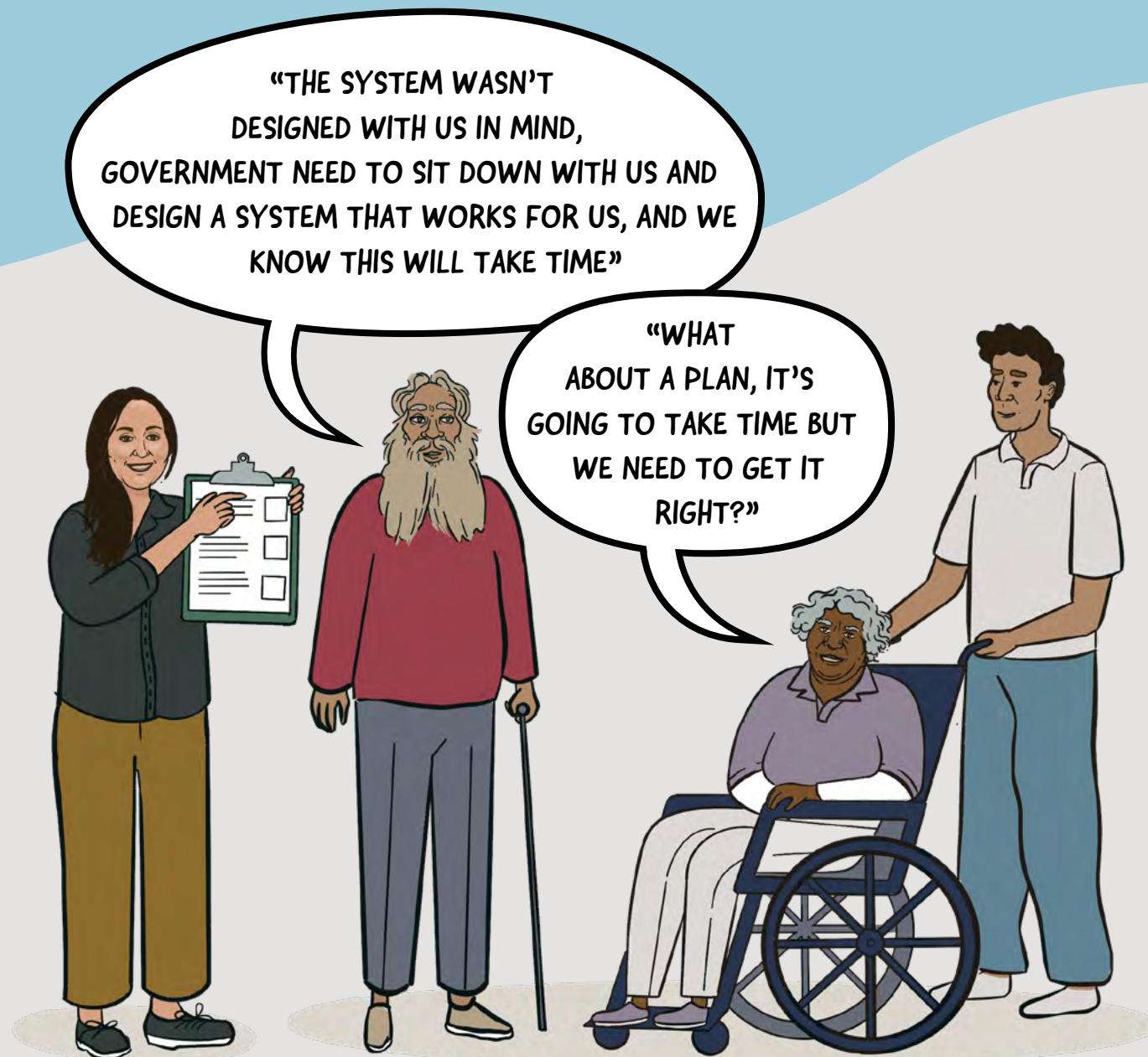
"ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE NEED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN SERVICES THAT ARE NOT CULTURALLY SAFE OR NOT ACCESSING CARE AND SUPPORT AT ALL"

"WE CAN'T GET WORKERS OUT HERE, OR CAN'T GET THEM TO STAY"

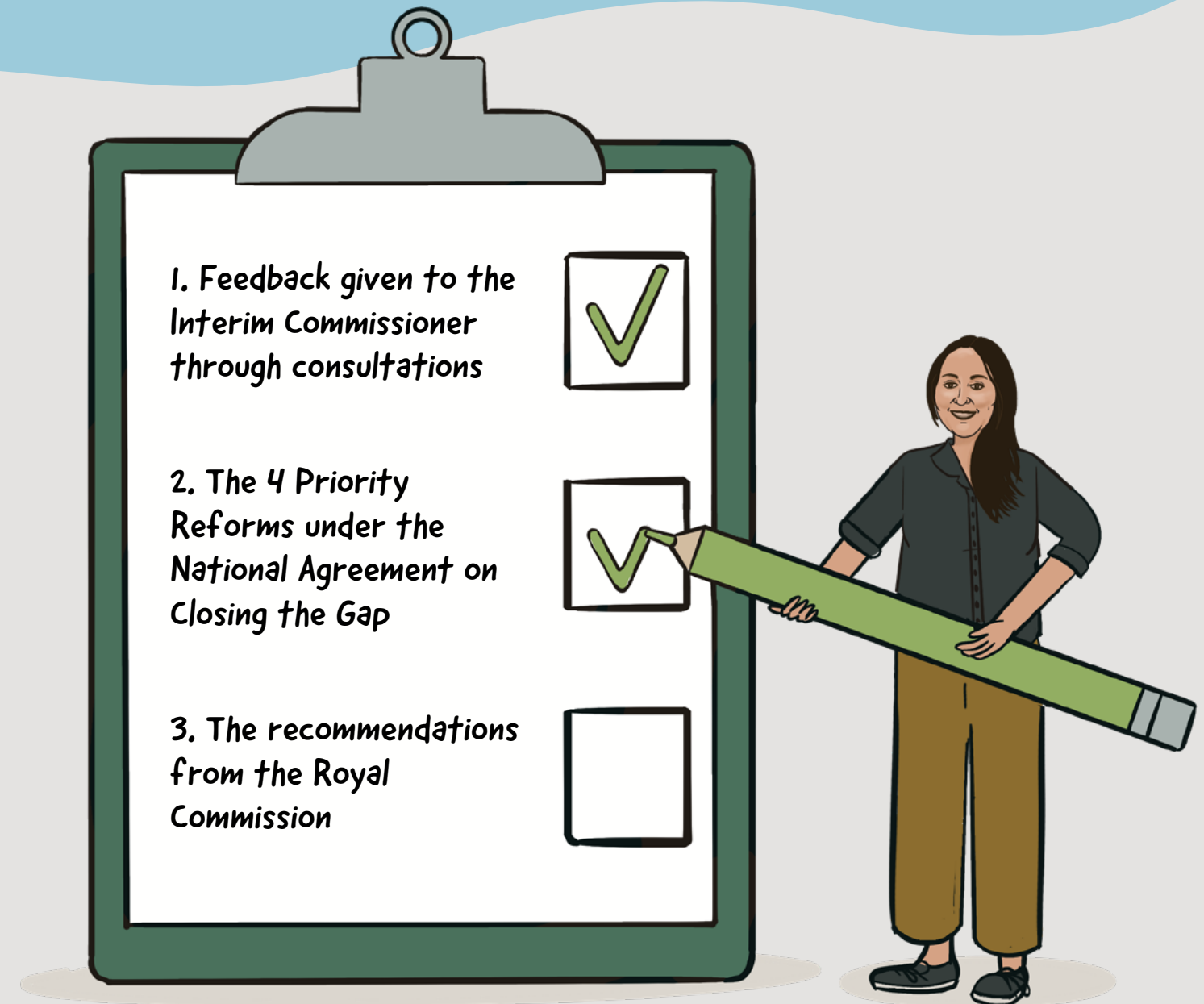


We need the services where we live, we shouldn't have to travel for hours just to access aged care services.

You told me that we need to make sure the aged care system is culturally safe, trauma-aware and healing informed.



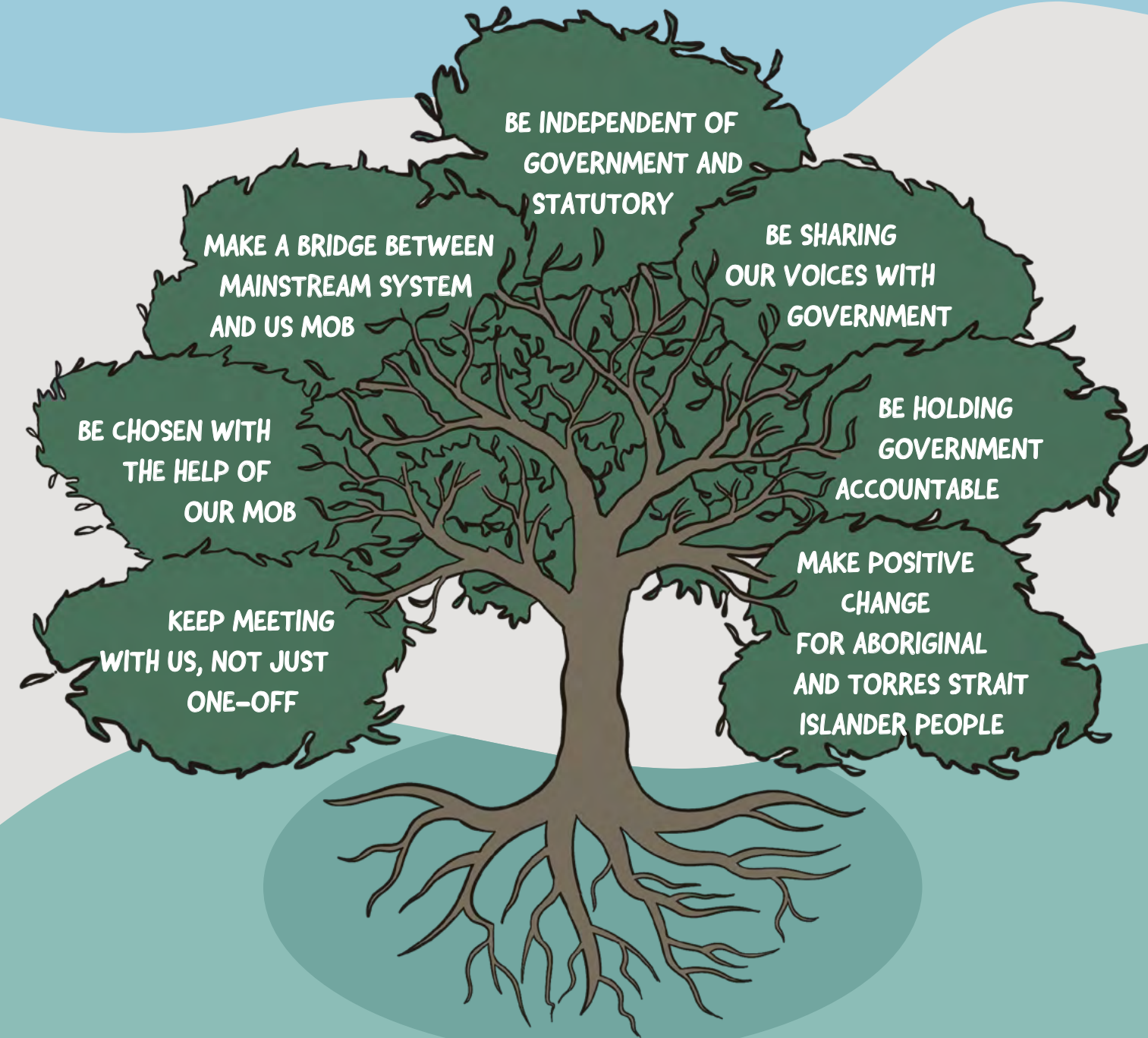
The plan needs to be transformative and based on 3 things...



From our yarns, you told me that having an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner was really important to you.



You told me that the permanent Commissioner should...



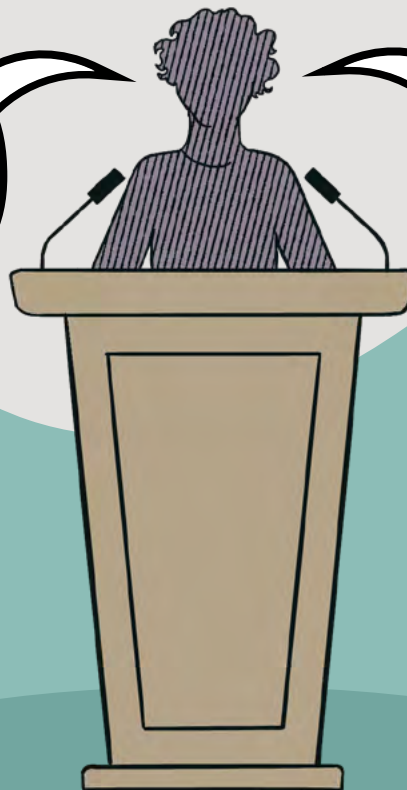
Community told me they want the permanent Commissioner to have "teeth". The Commissioner should be able to...

HOLD THE AGED CARE SYSTEM TO ACCOUNT

MAKE
RECOMMENDATIONS TO
GOVERNMENT

UNDERTAKE FORMAL
INQUIRES

MAKE
RECOMMENDATIONS AND
REPORT TO PARLIAMENT



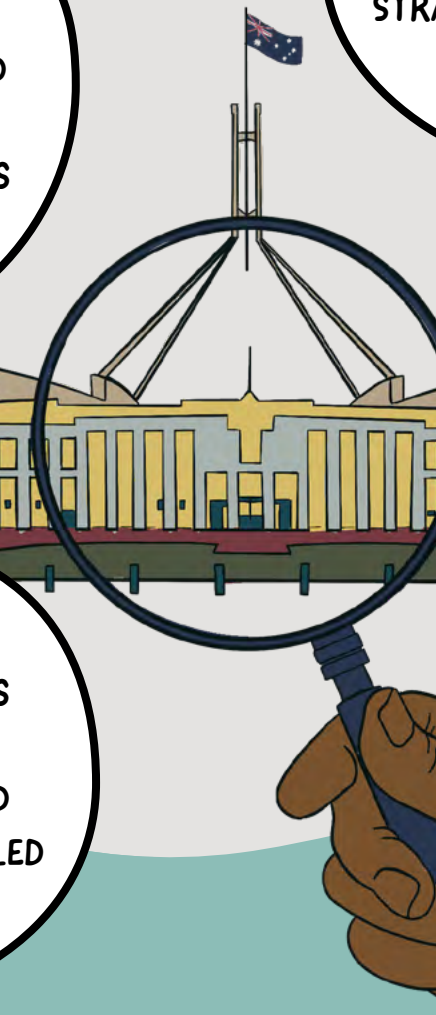
The Commissioner could focus on...

THE AGED
CARE SYSTEM IS
CULTURALLY SAFE AND
MEETS THE NEEDS OF
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER
PEOPLE

EQUITABLE
ACCESS AND
OUTCOMES FOR OLDER
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE
IN THE AGED CARE
SYSTEM

THE 4
CLOSING THE GAP
PRIORITY REFORMS
ARE IMPLEMENTED AS
THEY RELATE TO
AGED CARE

A STRONG
AND EXPANDED
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER AGED
CARE WORKFORCE AND
COMMUNITY-CONTROLLED
AGED CARE SECTOR



I wrote a report to Government about everything you told me. I made some recommendations and I will let you know when I hear back from the Minister...



In the meantime, I am here to help! And will continue to meet with communities and use your feedback to influence policy and program design.



