



# Council of Elders

## Meeting Communique – 19 & 20 March 2025

**Aged Care Reform Implementation** – The Council welcomed the ongoing bipartisan support for aged care reforms, ensuring their implementation remains on track for 1 July 2025. The Department provided an update on progress, including the work of the Transition Taskforce. Members look forward to this milestone and the upcoming Federal Budget announcements.

Members emphasised the importance of clear and accessible communication about the reforms, particularly for marginalised and vulnerable communities. Council also highlighted the value of engaging service clubs and community groups in sharing information with older Australians.

**Support at Home** – The Department outlined its engagement efforts to assist older people in transitioning to the new Support at Home program. Council are committed to assisting the department to develop a dedicated fact sheet on this topic with additional clarification needed on the treatment of unspent funds. Members also reviewed the latest update to Frequently Asked Questions and reinforced the importance of face-to-face engagement with older people is very important.

**NewDirection Residential Aged Care** – Council was pleased to receive a presentation from the Directors of NewDirection Care in Queensland, on its residential aged care model in Queensland. Members acknowledged the model's focus on enabling older people to "live a normal life". The model was designed from conversations with older people about what aged care should look like, what they would want for their families and for themselves. Members were impressed by the model, the capacity to combine financial viability with a values base, and saw it as a promising example for the future of aged care.

**Aged Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People** – Council received copies of the Transforming Aged Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People report and community booklet. Members reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner in implementing the report's recommendations, including the development of a Ten-Year Transformation Plan. The Council endorsed the principle of co-design with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and discussed the importance of local champions, addressing the digital divide, and better utilising Aboriginal Health Workers in communication efforts.

**Community Concerns and Engagement** – Council members remain actively engaged in their networks, listening to concerns about long wait times for services, understanding the reforms, and associated costs. Members noted that some of the most vulnerable older Australians risk disengagement from the system and stressed the need for tailored strategies to reach them. Many older people prefer hard copies of communication materials, and the

Council is working with the Department to ensure printed materials are available in hospitals and health networks. Members provided feedback

**My Aged Care Website** – Council participated in a demonstration of new online tools designed to help older people and their carers understand the aged care system. Members gave useful suggestions and supported these tools. They also saw a test version of a new calculator for the Support at Home program, which will show estimated service costs. Council acknowledged the importance of this tool in helping older people understand their service costs and hope it will be available soon.

**Fees and Contributions** – Council discussed improvements to hardship provisions to ensure that financial barriers do not prevent people from accessing services. Members highlighted the need for clear, widely available information on hardship provisions and suggested a fact sheet to support awareness. Ongoing monitoring of trends in hardship applications was also recommended.

**Other matters** – Members were happy to hear that the final draft of the new Aged Care Rules will be released soon. They also welcomed updates on the results of public consultations and are to engage hear your experiences, thoughts, and opinions.

The next meeting of the Council of Elders will be face to face on 21-22 May 2025.