

**From:** s47E(d)  
**To:** [HERALD, Russell](#)  
**Cc:** s47F s47E(c)  
**Subject:** FW: Update - MoW feasibility study - project status [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Date:** Tuesday, 16 January 2024 4:02:22 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)

Hi Rusty - fyi

CHSP and Continence Policy Section

Home Support Operations Branch

Home and Residential Funding Division | Department of Health and Aged Care

E | s47E(d)

**From:** s47F

**Sent:** Tuesday, 16 January 2024 10:59 AM

**To:** Home Support Policy

**Subject:** FW: Update - MoW feasibility study - project status [SEC=OFFICIAL]

**REMINDER:** Think before you click! This email originated from outside our organisation. Only click links or open attachments if you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Good morning Rusty, thank you for the update on Future Fit. And we appreciate we've come a long way since the meeting in Melbourne. I wanted to thank you and your team for keeping this going – our services need this to survive! And whilst we understand and appreciate the current circumstances particularly in relation to the Reference Group, the momentum and commitment jointly established by Miles Morgan and the participants will need to be reinvigorated. I know the participants are ready to go.

From our interactions with the participants, there is concern regarding the relationship with the Reference Group – we want to work together, but want to ensure **the voice of services are not lost**. We have made some great in roads re the definition of a meal and wouldn't want to lose this. We will certainly approach the relationship with positivity and do all we can to work towards the new deadline and genuine outcomes for Government and the meals network, however, we are hoping that the interactions with the Reference Group will take a similar approach.

Be assured as co-convenors we will do all we can to progress the project.

Kind regards

s47F



**Eat well.  
Live well.**

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[www.sutherlandfoodservices.org.au](http://www.sutherlandfoodservices.org.au)

**From:** s47F s47E(c) <[@Health.gov.au](mailto:@Health.gov.au)> **On Behalf Of** HERALD, Russell

**Sent:** Monday, 15 January 2024 4:39 PM

**To:** s47F

s47F

**Cc:** CONNOLLY, Thea <[Thea.Connolly@health.gov.au](mailto:Thea.Connolly@health.gov.au)>; s47F s47E(c)

[@health.gov.au](mailto:@health.gov.au); s47F

s47F

**Subject:** Update - MoW feasibility study - project status [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Dear Meals on Wheels (MoW) Feasibility Study Participants,

I thought it timely to provide you with an update on the Feasibility Study.

Since we met in October last year, the MoW Feasibility study process went through a particularly challenging period. While the objectives of the feasibility study are universally supported, you would all be aware that a number of issues about the Future Fit program were raised late last year which the department has been working through. This has impacted on our ability to implement the feasibility study by 1 July 2024 as intended, with a 1 January 2025 date now likely to be the earliest possible timeframe.

Consequently, the department is currently rebasing the project scope and considering options as we prepare advice to the Minister. As part of this, the department is looking to implement some changes to the governance of Future Fit, proposed by Meals on Wheels Australia and state MoW bodies. Subject to Ministerial endorsement, the department expects to be able to provide more detailed advice in February.

If you have any questions, please send an email to s47E(d) and I will work with the project team to provide a response.

Rusty

Russell Herald

**Assistant Secretary**

Home Support Operations Branch  
Home and Residential Division | Ageing and Aged Care Group  
Australian Government Department of Health

s47E(c) s47F

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Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

**From:** s47F  
**To:** s47F ; s47F ; [HERALD, Russell](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Confidential : Suggested solution for our Future Fit Dilemma  
**Date:** Tuesday, 13 February 2024 5:54:16 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image006.png](#)

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Hi,

All I have to add is that I agree and support what s47F have said and hope out all of this that we, the services get a positive outcome that ensures MoW is around in years to come for our communities, which is what FF was all about.

Keep the dream alive.

s47F

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**From:** s47F  
**Sent:** Monday, February 12, 2024 9:41 pm  
**To:** s47F ; HERALD, Russell  
 <Russell.Herald@health.gov.au>; s47G  
 s47G

**Subject:** RE: Confidential : Suggested solution for our Future Fit Dilemma

Evening all, firstly s47F thanks again for the great representation on behalf of the Future Fit team.

Russell I wholeheartedly support s47F proposals and I know s47F will as well. We have discussed similar options over the past few months.

Our aim is to drive a future for meal services, to work with Government and avoid the unnecessary barriers that can only result in a negative outcome for our respective communities and older Australians. We are on the ground day in and day out. Our lense on service delivery differs greatly from the peaks. Our agenda is significantly different from the peaks.

Russell what you have with the Future Fit team, as demonstrated by s47F is a 100% commitment to see this through. We have made such great headway and we are confident that we can deliver to Government an outcome that suits all parties, but most importantly our respective customers.

Too much time has been wasted with egos, emails, text messages, and the like. What LG and Miles Morgan have done is consolidated a group of services who have been crying out for leadership for many many years. The CTF is just one example of this wonderful working relationship that has been borne.

After 10 years with Sutherland Food Services I would have never had the opportunity to work with s47F. That consolidation of resources is there at your disposal, but

more importantly a willingness FOR THE RIGHT REASONS to push this forward. Collectively we have a host of resources, in our boards, our supporters and we can leverage those skills to make this happen. This is a game changer for sure, but it can also be a blueprint for the future.

I sincerely hope you don't think "we are dreamin" – would welcome any further information or opportunity to take this forward,

s47F



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E s47F

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**From:** s47F

**Sent:** Monday, 12 February 2024 10:13 PM

**To:** Russell Herald <Russell.Herald@health.gov.au>

**Cc:** s47F > s47F

s 47G

**Subject:** Confidential : Suggested solution for our Future Fit Dilemma

Russell

Following our meeting this afternoon Future Fit Services have basically two goals.

1. Keep the Future Fit Program Going.
2. Keep the program out of the hands of the Peaks who will then deliver a Peak driven (s47F driven) outcome instead of a service driven one.

I am suggesting a simple solution.

The Future Fit Services form our own Association or whatever entity we need to create to work across different States. Register as a Charity and Not For Profit. Basically use a Model constitution. Possibly use the current Future Fit logo.

Membership \$2 or whatever the current model constitution suggests.

We then formally request to be custodians of the Future Fit IP which we propose be Open Source. We are the services who effectively consulted on its development.

We run with no staff, just a voluntary committee. Continue to run with say fortnightly Chew the Fat sessions, and Committee meetings once a month. Expand with other members as we can.

From here we have two options. The first will be less contentious- but give slower results.

**Option 1**

- We run unfunded utilising the voluntary work of our member services.
- We approach corporate partners to develop the software and the meal definitions free of charge. I believe Polixen and like services would be interested.
- The department runs the Future Fit Feasibility Study as planned - The department meeting its own costs and the services their's.

[Services have already shown a willingness to invest time into this Project. This will simply be a small extension of that]

**Option 2**

- The department funds the new Association as a continuation of Future Fit. We then subcontract the required work.
- If necessary we could put on a person to Manage this. Possibly a secretarial role or if the funding is available someone with management skills familiar with the program that is currently available who could be appointed as CEO to drive it. On a fixed term contract basis of course.

The real beauty of this Association type model for both options is that it will be nation wide, not state based. Over a period of time we will pick up members who want to be part of the change. Who knows where that might lead to if we actually care for and listen to our members.

Before I float this with the broader Future Fit Team members I thought I would get a response from you.

As simple "has possibilities" or "Your Dreamin" will suffice.

I copied <sup>s47F</sup> in to get a feel for how they feel about this idea.

Cheers

<sup>s47F</sup>

Tamworth Meals on Wheels

<sup>s47F</sup>

Office hours 7:30am to 3:30pm



**From:** s47F  
**To:** s47E(c) s47F  
**Cc:** s47F  
**Subject:** RE: Catch up - Future Fit [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Date:** Tuesday, 13 February 2024 11:50:27 AM  
**Attachments:** [image002.png](#)  
[image007.png](#)  
[Ltr Minister Wells Open Source Software Request.docx](#)

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Hi s47E(c) thanks for the call and good to speak with you about how we achieve the common goal of delivering Future Fit. I'll await your email regarding the notice to Future Fit participants.

I still haven't been able to touch base with s47F but I will keep trying so she is also on the same page. I feel we are both share the same frustrations and fears! In all honesty nothing good with come from the peaks (Queensland being the one exception). As a group it's time for services to step up and take over from where Miles Morgan got us to which has been nothing short of a miracle (as I said in my email to Rusty last night). I wanted to share the attached email we sent to Minister Wells, as this supports what s47F has sent through last night and shows that to move ahead we must move to open source software so all services can benefit and there is a consistent ERP across the network.

We feel the most appropriate way forward will be to maintain the "service lead" initiative, that is:

- Service leaders (we have all but formed a leadership group) ensure a services led approach thereby keeping the voices of services to drive the project;
- This leadership group recommence Future Fit under our own steam which we feel will remove the politics and distractions as per s47F email;
- Once the dust has settled and the open source software is running we then come back to the Department to confirm our progress and how we get your support to move forward and recommence all aspects of the Future Fit program an deliver what will ensure older Australians are getting the best deal in terms of nutrition, wellness and social connection..

I know we can deliver this, the foundations are solid!

Cheers,

s47F



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**From:** s47E(c) s47F

**Sent:** Tuesday, 13 February 2024 9:35 AM

**To:** s47F

s47F

**Subject:** Catch up - Future Fit [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hey s47F

Any chance you have time for a quick catch up today?

Many thanks,

s47E(c) s47F

**Director - CHSP and Continence Policy**  
**Home Support Operations Branch**

Home and Residential Division | Ageing and Aged Care Group  
Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care  
T: 6289 s47E(c) s47F [@health.gov.au](mailto:s47F@health.gov.au)

Location: Level 7, Sirius Building  
GPO Box 9848, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia

*The Department of Health and Aged Care acknowledges First Nations peoples as the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to all Elders both past and present.*

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**From:** [HERALD, Russell](#)  
**To:** s47F  
**Cc:** s47F  
**Subject:** RE: Response from Senator Rice - Fw: Urgent: Senate Estimates Hearing Thursday - Future Fit Program [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]  
**Date:** Wednesday, 14 February 2024 2:53:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

Ta – will be a fun day tomorrow

**From:** s47F  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 14, 2024 2:31 PM  
**To:** HERALD, Russell  
**Cc:** s47F  
**Subject:** Response from Senator Rice - Fw: Urgent: Senate Estimates Hearing Thursday - Future Fit Program

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Rusty

FYI

s47F

Tamworth MOW

**From:** s47F  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 14 February 2024 1:03 PM  
**To:** s47F  
**Cc:** Manager Meals on Wheels s47G  
**Subject:** RE: Urgent: Senate Estimates Hearing Wednesday - Future Fit Program  
 Hi s47F

Thank you for your email to Senator Sharma and for including Senator Rice and our team.

Please find attached a letter from Senator Rice.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or want to discuss further.

Kind regards,

s47F | Senior Policy and Parliamentary Advisor

**Office of Senator Janet Rice**

**Australian Greens Senator for Victoria**

Shops 2-3, 26 Lygon Street, Brunswick East, 3057. Ph: 03 9381 1446

**Pronouns** – She/Her

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<http://greens.org.au/vic/person/janet-rice>

*The Office of Senator Janet Rice respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country on which we work*

**From:** s47F  
**Sent:** Monday, February 12, 2024 9:41 AM  
**To:** Sharma, Dave (Senator Office) s47F  
**Cc:** s47F s47F  
 s47F Rice, Janet (Senator) <[Senator.Rice@aph.gov.au](mailto:Senator.Rice@aph.gov.au)>;  
[barnaby.joyce@mp.nationals.org.au](mailto:barnaby.joyce@mp.nationals.org.au); Russell Herald s47F  
**Subject:** Urgent: Senate Estimates Hearing Wednesday - Future Fit Program

Senator Sharma

I am e-mailing you today asking for your assistance in the Senate Estimates Committee meeting on Wednesday.

s47F manager of Armidale Uralla Meals on Wheels and myself, s47F representing Tamworth Meals on Wheels are very concerned about the possible cancelling of the Future Fit Program which is so near completion.

I have attached a letter that we have drafted explaining the background and the progress of the Future Fit project.

The value in the project is critical to the Meals on Wheels services across the entire nation, developing best practice standards, resources, tools and funding models which can only benefit our consumers and achieve better outcomes for the investment by government.

The project has been derailed by three Meals on Wheels Peak bodies. The Peaks are out of step with their member services who are either fully supportive of the project, or are waiting with considerable interest to see the benefits that come from it. The opposition of the 3 Peaks is counter intuitive and appears self destructive, seems to be driven by a single personality who is involved in all three.

The project was initiated by the coalition and expanded by the current government. It is worthwhile and critical to maintain front line Meals on Wheels Services. If the project falls, over then it is very possible that when the CHSP program winds up in 2027, so will many of the smaller services. Council services are probably at the highest risk.

Please read our submission and if you believe that Meals on Wheels is a worthwhile Aged Care Service consider asking the questions that we have suggested.

We have also asked Senator Pratt to support us with the same questions. Her state of WA is in particular risk because of the dominance of council run Meals on Wheels programs.

If its possible to work with Senator Pratt on this issue showing bi-partisan support will help our cause a great deal.

Thank you for your time.

s47F

Tamworth Meals on Wheels

Office : s47F

Mobile: s47F

Office hours 7:30am to 3:30pm





Meals on Wheels

s47F

# MEALS ON WHEELS

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FOI 25-0231 LD - Document 6.1

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**Senator David Sharma** E: [senator.sharma@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.sharma@aph.gov.au)

**Senator Louise Pratt** E: [senator.pratt@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.pratt@aph.gov.au)

cc: Senator Janet Rice E: [senator.rice@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.rice@aph.gov.au)

cc: Barnaby Joyce MP. E: [barnaby.joyce@mp.nationals.org.au](mailto:barnaby.joyce@mp.nationals.org.au)

cc: Russell Herald - DoHAC E: [russell.herald@health.gov.au](mailto:russell.herald@health.gov.au)

**February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**Subject:** Request for assistance from Meals on Wheels services – upcoming Senate Estimates – Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Dear Senators,

We are writing to request your assistance at the Community Affairs Senate Estimates committee meeting on Wednesday, 14 February.

As you may recall from the committee meeting in October 2023, Senator Rice was running a line of questioning relating to a transformation project titled 'Future Fit'. Future Fit is a project initiated by the Coalition government and expanded by Labor. Departmental responsibility for the project rests with the Department of Health and Aged Care.

The Project involves 32 Meals on Wheels Services across 4 states. New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania are represented by individual services whilst in Victoria there are special projects at Ballarat and at Whitehorse in Melbourne. Future Fit is facilitated by the funded consultants Miles Morgan Australia (MMA).

Tamworth Meals on Wheels has been an active participant in this project and Armidale/Uralla Meals on Wheels has been a very interested 'observer' not having the resources to participate. All participating services pay their own costs and do not receive any subsidy other than an occasional travel reimbursement.

We are concerned about how questioning from Senator Rice is not only adversely portraying, but also misrepresenting the project and the meals on wheels services that have actively participated in this work.

As with any large group, there is a lot of politics within meals on wheels. Senator Rice openly admitted to us that she has a good and long-standing relationship with Mr Les Macdonald, CEO NSW Meals on Wheels.

Mr Macdonald has been CEO of NSW MOW for over 20 years. He also initiated the national peak body with representatives from each state forming Meals on Wheels Australia (MOWA) of which he has been one of the NSW representatives for its entire existence, until recently. Whilst tenures of that duration may be admirable there are inherent risks whenever one person holds a position of power and accumulates influence, especially where their roles overlap.

Mr Macdonald was also instrumental in the more recent establishment of the Support at Home Alliance and the 2023 appointment of Paul Sadler as the Chair of MOWA. Mr Macdonald, who is connected with all these peak organisations, has been very vocal about his displeasure with Future Fit and has freely expressed this both within and beyond the MOW-NSW network of services. Unfortunately, his

connection to multiple peaks strongly influences the opinions they express, including that of MOW-VIC whose submission to Senator Rice triggered the matter coming before Senate Estimates Thurs 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

We would ask you to be our voice in the meeting this week, to possibly challenge the source of Senator Rice's information and to put on the record some of the politicking which has led to the undermining of Future Fit, instead of highlighting its benefits.

While we understand this is a considerable ask given the short amount of time before the committee, we cannot convey how important it will be for frontline Meals on Wheels services to have a champion for transparency and accountability.

We met with Senator Rice on the 11<sup>th</sup> December last year, at her request, and hoped that the meeting would give her a better understanding of the complexity of the current Meals on Wheels program from both a government and a service point of view.

There is a whole lot of smoke and mirrors being used to distract from the core issue at hand, which is the value proposition of allowing Future Fit to see its conclusion.

**Please Do Not allow this project to be torpedoed** because of the biased agendas of a few peak bodies (MOW-NSW, MOW-VIC and MOWA) who are completely out of step with their own member services. By contrast the Queensland peak is fully supportive of Future Fit.

We believe the continuation and successful completion of the Future Fit project is critical to the sustainability of Meals on Wheels services which provide more than just a meal. Meals on Wheels services maximise government investment supporting people in their own homes longer with sound nutrition and regular social welfare checks.

For your information and consideration, we attach background information about the Future Fit project and questions that you may wish to put to the Department at the Committee meeting.

Yours sincerely

s47F

s47F

s47F

s47F

s47F

s47F

Tamworth Meals on Wheels

Armidale Uralla Meals on Wheels Inc.

We have attached Armidale's submission to Senator Rice dated 10<sup>th</sup> November with its attachments which are self explanatory.

## Future Fit Program

### Background

The government is introducing new Aged Care Legislation and needs to have a sound understanding of the meals services they are funding. Meals on Wheels services receive a tiny percentage of the Aged Care budget, yet it has the potential to have the greatest impact for money invested based on maintaining quality of life, health, mobility and slowing cognitive decline simply through early intervention, maintaining sound nutrition and regular social contact through the meal delivery and effective welfare check.

Meals on Wheels, through our professional services and army of volunteers effectively delay the need for clients to access more intense Aged Care services. We do not understand the Senator's objections to an 8 to 10 Million dollar project that, done thoroughly and methodically, has the potential to save the government millions of dollars in the future. Miles Morgan Australia, the contractors coordinating the project have put their heart and soul into the project and have been demonised for being awarded the contract.

### Why was Future Fit established?

For the last 70 years Meals on Wheels Services have grown organically across the country. The movement was and is community based with every service, large and small, being unique.

Initially services were run by volunteers, then by a paid Coordinator managing volunteers. Now most services are funded through the CHSP, professionally run with paid staff and continue to utilise an army of volunteers to keep costs down. In the recent Royal Commission CHSP services were the only section of the Aged Care program to receive a positive tick.

As services developed and struggled to survive funding was often lobbied for and varied to ensure services survived. The current transitional model is block funding in arrears based on the historical contracted meal delivery number and a set price per meal unit. In practice this means there is a broad range of operational funding structures with varying prices and meal targets, which in many cases were negotiated to keep services operational. For example, some services are way under their meal targets and others way over. Meal contracts vary by many dollars per unit depending on historical negotiations.

Another way that services achieve targets is the way they count their meal units. For example, some services claim one meal unit for a meal package – A main + soup + dessert, while other services claim a meal unit for each of these items. These differences effectively mean that the limited data the government collects through its DEX system is meaningless.

### The Main Goals of Future Fit:

- Establish a way of getting nutrition data consistently across all services
- Establish the current baseline for the way services claim outputs
- Establish a consistent meal definition
- Establish an accessible reporting mechanism to record meal units
- Establish a consistent funding arrangement for services
- Establish the value of the Social Support component of the resulting delivery welfare check
- Ensure Meals on Wheels Services are funded adequately to deliver contracted services
- Establish a viable business model to ensure continuity of meal services
- Ensure the government gets value for money
- Critically – ensure Aged Care clients get the best service possible

## **Future Fit Progress:**

### ○ **Data Collection**

- Two large data stocktakes were undertaken surveying services. In real terms only NSW and QLD participated because most other states have either centralised models or council run services
- The results identified the uniqueness of every service – showing a complexity unexpected by government who were being told of a more structured network by the Peaks
- The stocktake also showed many services lived month to month financially
- Following the stocktakes, the Department chose to contact services directly bypassing the peaks, organising Town Hall Meetings in Sydney and Queensland.
- Queensland MOW attended these meetings as they are both a peak and a service provider

### ● **Client Relationship Management Program** (Software) to gather live data

- Developed and is operating at Whitehorse in Melbourne
- This was fast tracked when Ballarat and Whitehorse City Council in Melbourne withdrew from providing Meals on Wheels Services when CHSP funding changed to payment in arrears.
- The department looked for a provider to take on the services and in consultation with MMA offered the contract to proven and viable services.
- The department contracted Queensland Meals on Wheels to service Ballarat and Newcastle Meals on Wheels to support Whitehorse.
- The new software is functioning as a basic meal program, but not yet fully developed to the level that will maximise data recovery for service and government planning.
- The concept is aspirational and could potentially give the government live nutritional data for ageing clients across the entire Meals on Wheels network enabling better future modelling once it is fully developed.

**It is critical that this work is not lost, and does not fall into the hands of a developer to profit from.**

### ● **Definition of a Meal Unit - trial**

- Through a strong consultation process with the Feasibility Study participants and professional nutritionists this piece of work is in its final phase and almost ready to trial.
- When trialed this work will determine the definition of a Meal Unit and at what level each meal unit will be funded to ensure viability of both the organisations while maximizing value for government.
- This will ensure meaningful data based on nutritional values can be captured.

**This piece of work, almost completed, is critical for services and government to get right. This will ensure appropriate funding for services delivering an early intervention model while providing a cost effective outcome for government. The data captured could be a game changer for future modelling.**

### ● **Financial Viability of the Services**

- A financial consultant was sub-contracted by MMA to analyse the Feasibility Study participant's business models.
- The consultant gained access and downloaded all necessary financial data with a goal to advise ways to streamline businesses.
- A few services have had face to face visits to give the financial advisers a real feel for each service.

- We are unaware of any feedback on the outcome of this part of the program. Feedback will most probably be individualised.
- **Service collaboration**
  - Services participating in Future Fit have been having regular Teams meetings supporting each other and developing ideas.
  - Everything from food labelling to direct debits, menu structures, hot and cold meals, compliance issues and Aged Care reforms are discussed.
  - The benefit from these meetings is an unexpected bonus of the Future Fit project – bringing progressive, innovative services together in mutual support.
  - This collaboration will be made available to all services across the network in the next few months. While it was initiated by the Future Fit project it is independent and will give every service in the country an opportunity to participate.

These results are tangible outcomes, beneficial and meaningful to all Meals on Wheels Services.

The Future Fit project is in danger of being dismantled because a few voices disagree with the way it was implemented, the selection of the consultant, and that NSW and QLD services were tasked to support their Victorian cousins at a time when Council Services are withdrawing from service delivery all over the country.

We believe the potential payback for services. Our consumers and government on this program is immense, measured in better client outcomes and many millions of dollars in savings based on early intervention by a nationwide responsive Meals on Wheels program.



## Senator Sharma

We have attached some questions for the department in relation to the future fit project.

Given the importance of the Future Fit project, please would you consider asking as many of these questions below that you are comfortable with. If you only ask one question can it please be the highlighted point 9.

1. The department has invested heavily in the Future Fit project. How much importance does the department place on a strong Meals on Wheels program and what are the expectations of the Future Fit project if it is funded to its completion?
2. If Future Fit continues being funded, and the outcomes met, do you believe there will be a tangible pay back on investment based on improved health outcomes? (effectively delaying higher care services due to early intervention, better nutrition and regular social contact through the Meals on Wheels program)
3. Is there modelling to suggest how much the government will save if a more robust and responsive Meal on Wheels service model is in place.
4. Apart from Newcastle Meals on Wheels, who recently had a major change in Board membership and subsequently a change in strategic direction, have any Future Fit Services made any complaints about the program ?
5. Have any services not involved in the Future Fit project made any Complaints about the Future Fit project and or the Feasibility Study?
6. Does Queensland Meals on Wheels support the project?
7. Does Meals on Wheels Tasmania support the project?
8. Do the Services participating in the Future Fit Feasibility Study support the project?
- 9. When the Future Fit program progress's to completion – or if it ceases mid project, will the department make the intellectual property developed, including statistical data, Policies, Procedures and Client Management Software freely available to services as Open Source, choosing a custodian approved by the project participants?**

**(The project participants are concerned that if the IP is granted to a developer or one of the Meals on Wheels Peak Bodies, access will only be granted through membership or subscription- for something we helped developed for the benefit of all Meals on Wheels Services)**

**To:** Senator Janet Rice  
Senator for Victoria  
**E:** [senator.rice@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.rice@aph.gov.au)

**9<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

Dear Senator,

We write to you from Armidale / Uralla Meals on Wheels, located in northern NSW. Our service is a community based not-for-profit organisation formed in 1966. In 2022-23 financial year we were contracted with the Department of Health and Aged Care to deliver 37,376 meals, with actual outputs over 60,000. We provided meals to 348 clients, relying on a volunteer workforce of around 200. We employ six trained staff (EFT= 4.5) to prepare the meals in our own kitchen, and manage our relationships with our clients, volunteers, suppliers and numerous agencies.

We are not reaching out to you with the intent of refuting or substantiating Meals on Wheels Victoria's (MOW-VIC) claims. We viewed the Senate Estimates hearing on 26th October with interest, not knowing the content of the MOW-VIC submission until a few days afterwards.

We are distressed by the extreme bias demonstrated in MOW-VIC's submission. Unfortunately, the language it uses is consistent with much of the communication from our peak bodies over the last 12 months.

Our belief is that, in essence, the picture of Meals on Wheels being portrayed to the Department of Health and Aged Care by the collective peaks has been inaccurate.

As soon as an independent external consultant accessed the inner workings of the peaks (state and national) a very different picture began to emerge, and understandably the Department had some questions.

It's not unexpected for the peaks to defend their position and they have done so in concert.

By way of summary and to recap the telephone discussion with Victoria Taylor on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, we respectfully submit our opinion.

### **Meals on Wheels (MOW) – Peak Bodies**

Meals on Wheels Australia (MOWA) is our national peak body.

Each state also has a peak body, and they internally nominate representatives to the Board of MOWA. The MOW-NSW representative is MOW-NSW Chairman, Mr Chris Watt who is the Vice President of MOWA. Until 2022, MOW-NSW CEO, Mr Les MacDonald was a long-standing member of the MOWA Board Executive.

*We note that, apart from its own enterprises, MOW-NSW receives Sector Support & Development funding under the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) from the Department of Health & Aged Care (DoHAC).*

### Contracting Miles Morgan Australia

Our understanding is that MOWA sought project funding from the DoHAC to develop and grow Meals on Wheels operations into a network of modern, responsive service providers in a new paradigm of aged care at home, in addition to securing funding for its own operational future as a national peak body.

We believe the Department wanted to avoid setting a precedent in providing funding directly to a peak body. Miles Morgan Australia (MMA) was appointed as the chosen consultancy firm to undertake the project.

If, as alleged by MOW-VIC, there are probity issues with the contracting arrangement, we trust the appropriate processes are in place to deal with such allegations, although we are aware MMA has a track record of consultancy services across a number of Commonwealth portfolios.

### Critical of project outcomes

The 'Future Fit' project parameters were a little ambiguous, but we understand the inherent need for data for planning, funding projections and the overall assessment of service provision. In the context of Aged Care Reform, we have completed so many surveys, feedback, and consultation documents and this was just another task to complete, but one that would cater more specifically to Meals on Wheels services.

Initial invitations to participate in 'Future Fit' were issued from MOWA, via NSW-MOW in February & March 2022. Services were strongly encouraged to participate due to the proposed benefits of the project:

The objective of FUTURE FIT is to give Meals on Wheels clients, volunteers, communities and funders improved transparency on value, impact, and costs.

It is about providing capability that is sustainable. While the impact of nutrition is well understood, the Meals on Wheels value proposition acknowledges the entirety of the service – that is, more than a meal.

However, true benefit to government, clients and the community will only be realised if we can all harness a truly connected network of members.

At an individual service, this means having more time to focus on the needs of clients and volunteers and continuing to make a positive impact in your community.

The first stage is the Finance and Operations stocktake to **identify our current national footprint and requirements.**

*\*Extract from MOW-NSW Services newsletter*

The data collected revealed the current national footprint of Meals on Wheels services. It just wasn't what the Department was expecting.

### **Future Fit Project shines a light on Meals on Wheels**

When the Finance & Operations Stocktake report was presented, it was obvious that QLD and NSW data dominated the reports. On questioning why, we were informed that services in these two states have similar operational models and therefore a data snapshot was easier to capture for comparative purposes.

Our understanding is that Tasmania and South Australia have a 'hub and spoke' model with centralised operations, and MOW services in Victoria are predominantly overseen by Councils.

*It was around this time that national media were reporting that due to funding uncertainty Victorian Councils were opting to relinquish their DoHAC contracts for MOW services.*

*The Age ran an article on Sept 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022 criticising Council services for replacing the traditional MOW model with bulk delivery options such as Lite N Easy.*

*MOW-VIC was quick to add to the chorus of voices critical of the proposed removal of CHSP block funding and the impact it would have on Council-based services in Victoria.*

*The ongoing exodus of Council-run MOW services and the uptake of options such as Lite N Easy happened under the watch of MOW-VIC.*

*Using Lite N Easy as a 'drop and run' delivery solution certainly pre-dates any arrangements with service providers from other states.*

The variation in service models was news to us, perhaps naively thinking all MOW services were similar. It became evident that the similarity is only in the endpoint - the provision of meal services to vulnerable people.

What is defined as a 'meal' is varied; the unit cost is varied; the service offering is varied; the delivery model is varied; the structure of the actual organisation is varied.

We don't think the Department was expecting such a disparity across the network of services.

**The positive to note is that every single MOW service in Australia has evolved organically in response to the needs of the community it serves and that is paramount to their success and their solid reputation of quality services over 70 years – there is no disputing this.**

### **Shooting the Messenger**

There is criticism from the peaks that MMA is seeking to meet a prescribed brief from the bureaucrats; this was reciprocated with criticism directed at the peaks for concealing the reality of the MOW network from the Department.

We believe, at least initially, that MMA were effectively 'caught in the crossfire' because they facilitated and provided the data that was being disputed.

We think this is about the time that things 'got ugly'.

### **Meanwhile in the trenches ....**

During this period, there were some MOW-NSW issues brewing in the background.

The Manager of Newcastle MOW, Mr Damien Isaacs, was elected to the MOW-NSW Board by his peers in 2018.

It's now public knowledge that early in 2023 Mr Isaacs raised concerns about governance matters within the MOW-NSW Board environment. Mr Isaacs reports that these concerns were 'shut down' by the MOW-NSW Board Executive as part of a recurring pattern.

What had been occurring behind closed doors spilled out into the MOW-NSW network through a series of emails during April and May 2023 revealing a very bitter dispute resolution process and a subsequent investigation involving lawyers on both sides. It is worth noting that a copy of the 'confidential' investigation report was later offered to all MOW-NSW services by the CEO, Mr MacDonald.

We mention this incident because it illustrates both the level of ill-feeling within the MOW-NSW Board and the power imbalance held by the Executive and the CEO whose conduct has been condescending and unprofessional at best.

Mr MacDonald has an impressive resume as the founder of MOW-NSW and subsequently, MOWA. He was also instrumental in the more recent establishment of the Support at Home Alliance and the 2023 appointment of Paul Sadler as the Chair of MOWA. He has been very vocal about his displeasure with the Future Fit project and has freely expressed this both within and beyond the MOW-NSW network of services.

Unfortunately, his involvement with multiple peaks strongly influences the opinions they express including recently, that of MOW-VIC.

Newcastle MOW is one of the services participating in the ongoing Future Fit project and Mr Isaacs has been actively lobbying services around the state to embrace the process of change and growth. This is at odds with the MOW-NSW Board Executive and most of the correspondence to MOW-NSW Members in the last 8 months, endorsed or written by Mr MacDonald, has been demonstrably and publicly anti-Future Fit.

MOW-NSW, through its CEO, have adopted an us-vs-them mentality, whilst accusing MMA and the Future Fit participants of doing the same, as demonstrated in the attached documents.

Until these matters became public, many services were content to trust that the peaks were acting in our best interests. As the situation evolved some services, including ours, sought clarification or explanation from Mr MacDonald about some of the communications circulating. These queries were met with critical, condescending, evasive and dismissive responses and often these were shared across the entire network of services.

It shows poor governance from the MOW-NSW Board to allow its CEO to dispense his views in a way that claims to represent the Board and the majority of Member services. These incidents have damaged the relationships across the state and national networks and caused many services to disengage from the peaks.

## **The Relevance of Data - What will Future Fit achieve?**

The services within Future Fit have a different perspective from the peaks on how to improve the service model of Meals on Wheels. The Future Fit group is seeking out operational models that might be more efficient for services, also keeping in mind that rural and regional services face different challenges and supply chain issues to their metropolitan colleagues.

The additional project funding is allowing the Future Fit project team to pursue more robust data for the Department to use in shaping the funding model for Meals on Wheels services. The project participants are contributing their own time and resources to trial new methodologies whilst also reviewing the nutritional adequacy and quality of all food items produced.

As service providers it seems natural for us to be critical of departmental directives around how we operate. Whilst we enjoy the flexibility of guidelines which are open to interpretation, this flexibility facilitates a situation where service modelling has become so diverse that it is now impossible for the Department to attempt to define a core set of parameters by which all MOW services can operate.

The proposed Support at Home (SAH) consumer assessment process indicates that a Service Plan will have a prescribed allocation of services to consumers, which determines a client's budget.

Lack of clarity and consistency around the definition of a "meal unit" impacts the ability of the Department to appropriately apportion a "unit cost". An assessor's task of allocating a specified service plan will be complicated by the varying definitions between services and between states.

We know that, for example, South Australian services provide a "3 course meal" and count this as a single meal output. Most of our colleagues around the region in northern NSW count a single meal as a single meal output. If we deliver two food items, they are likely to be consumed as two separate meals and therefore we report these as two outputs.

Everyone thinks THEIR methodology is correct.

The peaks have done very little to seek a consistent approach across each state, let alone nationally. Had this been achieved in the past, the complexities faced by the Department now would have been significantly reduced. This may also have provided some clarification on the ongoing debate around unit costing.

**This is what the Future Fit project is trying now to achieve.**

## **Business As Usual**

The peaks have demonstrated a lack of insight into their own shortcomings as representative organisations. The transparency they spoke of in their initial invitation to participate in the Future Fit project has not been evident.

Upon reflection, it appears that the peaks were content to have services continue in exactly the same manner as they always have – without growth or change or seeking more contemporary business methods and opportunities.

A comfortable option was to actively lobby the Department around the AN-ACC funding model, which would recognise meal outputs in addition to supporting baseline operational costs. It's so simple! The services would not have to change anything at all but would continue to secure ongoing block funding.



However, the flaw in this plan is that the Department still requires a solid data set to make informed decisions about any future funding model. This is the data that the Future Fit project is providing - initially from the stocktakes and now the project team is currently working through the Feasibility Study.

It is a huge undertaking by the 30+ services engaged in the project. It was beyond the capacity of our organisation to participate in the Future Fit Project, due to staffing issues and the general busy-ness of our organisation. So, we are watching from the sidelines and providing input and suggestions where possible.

### **Conclusion**

Contrary to the negative messages issued by the peaks, we do not believe that MMA set out to reveal a fractured Meals on Wheels network. The fractures only became apparent once the stocktake phase of the Future Fit was complete. It is sad that the peaks have been publicly stating otherwise. NSW services have been inundated with a stream of negative messages about the Future Fit project and MOW-NSW have targeted their anger towards MMA and several project participants – Mr Isaacs in particular.

We believe that MOWA was aggrieved from the outset that they did not secure the Future Fit project funding directly. This is an odd belief given that government was unlikely to award such a contract to a peak body in preference to an experienced and recognised consultancy.

While being perturbed initially that the Future Fit project has been brought before a Senate Estimates Committee, we now believe that this is an opportunity to shine a light on the misrepresentation of our sector by our peak bodies, and the quality of governance behind it.

In particular we have a real concern that if the MOW-NSW Board continues to avoid engaging constructively with the Department then smaller Meals on Wheels services will basically wither on the vine come July 2025.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this information to you.

Kind Regards,

s47F

s47F

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s47F

s47F

s47F

### **Attached:**

MOW-NSW quarterly publication – Wintalyka Issue #2 “Message from our CEO”

MOW-NSW quarterly publication – Wintalyka Issue #3 “Message from our CEO”

MOW-NSW Annual Report – Treasurers Report



## A message from our CEO...

Les MacDonald  
CEO, Meals on Wheels NSW



It is I think important that I address the issues that have diverted so much of the Association's and the network's time and resources over recent months into fruitless, unnecessary and damaging interpersonal and inter-organisational conflict. In order to understand that, it is necessary to have some context to those events. The Federal Department of Health and Ageing decided nearly two years ago now, to appoint an external consultant to provide assistance to MOW services around Australia to develop processes, systems and tools to enable those services to cope with the emergence of the new funding and classification system that the then government were proposing to introduce into the Care at Home space for older Australians by end June 2023. The Department appears to have decided upon that course of action without having a relatively mature understanding of the complexity of the MOW system throughout Australia and of the different levels of development and structure that then existed between different states.

That created a major problem in that when the consultants who were appointed to undertake that task turned their minds to the task, they found to their surprise that what had been told to them about that complexity and differences in structure had been correct. That raised the question of how the consultant was to deliver on what they had undertaken to do across Australia in their contract with the Department. It was apparently decided that the body chosen to take the blame for that lack of understanding by the Consultant and the Department was The Australian Meals on Wheels Association (AMOWA). Thus began a process which led to confusing both the Department and AMOWA as to the alleged actions and decisions of each other. As a result of that confusion, whether deliberately created or due to failure of processes, the Department were led to believe that AMOWA was a problem for Future Fit and should be excluded from participation. It appears apparent from statements attributed to the Departmental Officer concerned that he believed what he was being told. The result appears to have been the exclusion of AMOWA from the Future Fit process at a very early stage.

In order to cope with the reality that the consultant belatedly discovered they began to drastically modify the coverage of the project by in effect reducing it to principally two states, Queensland and New South Wales, and changing the language to suggest that those two states were the only parts of the network that were "active" and functional. The creation of that impression appeared to be necessary to deal with the fact that the original contract with the consultant was meant to deal with the entire MOW system throughout Australia.

In order to show delivery on the contract requirements it became clear that it was necessary to achieve the participation of virtually all the services in those two states for the project to have any credibility within government. The two state bodies were convinced to try to assure that level of total participation, despite expressions of concern about the ability to achieve that level of participation. Both bodies responded actively and professionally and put major resources into achieving the two stocktakes, without much yet in the way of return to the services for that participation. That effort to obtain sign-on

## A message from our CEO cont'd...

was complicated by the inability to obtain a clear and compelling indication of what services would achieve from the process. That lack of clarity has continued pretty much up to the present, compounded by a culture of secrecy worthy of ASIO. That failure in transparency has led to some distrust within the network in NSW as to what exactly it is that they will get from what is a very time consuming and costly expenditure of public funds.

To further complicate the issue, a very small number of member services within the network whose service model ideas do not correspond with those of a clear majority of the network, appear to have seen Future Fit as a way to put their system design ideas into practice throughout the network. Those member services have created, almost certainly unwittingly, a level of potential conflict and dissension within the network that, if successful, could be extremely damaging to the reputation and service model that services have worked so hard for decades to develop and sustain. The ideas of this small group, in so far as it is possible to summarise a broad collection of not necessarily related ideas, appear to focus around the idea that our network can best survive by changing our service model to match the service model of commercial organisations in the meal supply to the home space. That means, to a greater or lesser extent, changing from our very successful relational model of service delivery to a far more transactional model. There are a number of other ideas within that group including centralising purchasing functions, eliminating production kitchens and purchasing all supplies from commercial meal suppliers, etc. As you will all know we have canvassed the network on a number of occasions about such ideas and you have convincingly demonstrated that you simply do not agree with adopting those. We will of course continue to seek your views as circumstances change.

Unfortunately whether deliberate or due to incapacity, the combined efforts of this rather disparate group appears to be undermining the established roles of both MOWNSW and the bulk of the services. The cumulative effect of their actions in collaboration with the consultant, appears to have led to the unfortunate, costly and diversionary situation which we recently faced on the board of the Association. That has not only absorbed enormous amounts of board and staff time, but has cost a very substantial amount of money that would otherwise have been spent in supporting the network. We are working hard to put these aggravations behind us and continue the high level of services that we know that you appreciate and expect. We have convened a Webinar that all members have been invited to attend that will give an opportunity for members to understand the complexities of the situation that has arisen and to ask whatever questions they feel need answering.

I am sure that you all appreciate that division in such networks as ours only renders us weak and vulnerable and that is the last thing we need during a time when we are lobbying flat out to support all of you and to ensure you have a long and healthy future.



# A message from our CEO...

Les MacDonald

CEO, Meals on Wheels NSW

Hi all,



The last few months have been really eventful for our organisation nationally. As you would all know, we celebrated National Meals on Wheels Day on 30th August, celebrating 70 years since Australia's Meals on Wheels journey began when Mrs. E. Watts pedalled her tricycle around South Melbourne, delivering meals to the needy. Our team have been out as part of the Wholesome 70 Years Roadshow and service visits to celebrate this National milestone as well as local milestones, with many NSW services also reaching their milestone years of 50, 60 or 65 years in 2023. And as we stop and reflect on Mrs E. Watts journey seven decades ago in Victoria, we reflect on the reasons why she may have started this service, and what comes top of mind is local people wanting to support their local community and starting a movement in Australia that would, 70 years later, continue to enrich and strengthen local communities.

If your service hasn't already, you should expect to very soon receive a copy of the Best Practice Guidelines, which have been adapted for NSW from a document that was originally put together by consultations with the Meals on Wheels Victoria Committee and service provider representatives in Victoria. NSW took on the project of adapting the Victorian Guidelines for our own use because we believe that they capture the spirit of the Meals on Wheels model so very well, in addition to the practical and operational advice.

In light of this proud Victorian legacy, it is sadly serendipitous that there is now concerning news coming out of Victoria with the departure of local governments from the provision of CHSP services. The process of finding new providers by the Commonwealth Health and Aged Care Department have not to date been encouraging regarding any level of public service understanding of the essence of the Meals on Wheels model that has sustained and built it's community respect and admiration over those seventy years. For instance, in the Whitehorse Council area in Melbourne the Meals on Wheels service that has taken over from the Council appears to be being operated by a private management consultant employed by the Department fronting for a NSW service provider as a way to ensure continued funding at a level well above that provided to long standing Victorian Meals on Wheels services. We've been advised that the previous staff of the service have been sacked by the consultant who have brought in Lite n' Easy (along with two other meal providers) to deliver the meals with limited, if any, social support contact and well-being monitoring of the client, often with meals that do not meet the National Meal Guidelines and therefore the nutritional and health needs of the clients. Clients and volunteers are reportedly angry and dissatisfied and are increasingly leaving. The consultant concerned is the one employed by the Department to run a program costing \$7.5 million of taxpayer funds to allegedly prepare Meals on Wheels for the new Aged Care Act to be passed by the Federal Parliament in 2024. This contract has been in place since before Covid (around three years) and little if anything, has yet been produced by the consultant in the way of usable resources for network members around Australia. On the positive side however, the work of the Support at Home Alliance in producing a proper funding model now appears to be largely reflected in the one they are testing with the services participating in Future Fit. We have been excluded by the consultant from participating in Future Fit but we will keep you informed as further information comes to hand.

Les





## ELECTORATE OFFICE

Shop 2-3, 26 Lygon St  
Brunswick East VIC 3057  
P: (03) 9381 1446

## SENATE OFFICE

Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
P: (02) 6277 3225

Dear s47F,

Thank you for your email. I appreciate you reaching out to Senator Sharma and cc'ing me.

I apologise if I gave the impression that I do not support the Future Fit program. I want to make it clear that I support the original intent of this program and understand that it is important to the future of Meals on Wheels, particularly for the transition to Support at Home.

In my initial questioning of Future Fit last year, I did this on behalf of my constituency who raised questions about the program in Victoria. Since this time I have spoken to a variety of MoW services about the project and visited Meals on Wheels Whitehorse and met with representatives from Meals on Wheels Newcastle and Queensland.

The main issues that have arisen from my various meetings with the MoW network relate to the work of Miles Morgan Australia and the Department's management of this contract. I intend to pursue a line of questioning about MMA at Senate Estimates on Thursday.

My team have also been talking with the Minister for Aged Care's team directly and we have expressed our support for the Future Fit program and desire for it to continue.

If you have any further concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Kind regards

s47F

Janet Rice

**Australian Greens spokesperson for Older Australians**

**From:** [HERALD, Russel](#)  
**To:** [CONNOLLY, Thea](#); s47E(c) s47F  
**Subject:** FW: Future Fit Submission [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Date:** Thursday, 15 February 2024 12:13:26 PM

**From:** s47F  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 15, 2024 12:11 PM  
**To:** HERALD, Russell <Russell.Herald@health.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Central Coast Meals on Wheels Inc MOW s47F  
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**Subject:** Re: Future Fit Submission

Russell Herald  
DOHAC

## Rusty

I have contacted the other Future Fit Services and we as a group would like an opportunity to put in a tender to take up the Future Fit program.

Most of the 33 services that make up Future Fit are in favour of putting in a submission to self manage the program when Miles Morgan exits in March. These 33 services represent a significant percentage of the meal deliveries across 3 states.

We recognise the perceived conflict of interest in managing the program ourselves but believe this can be managed through a rigorous Terms of Reference.

The services will form a legal entity, an incorporated Association or similar to manage the Program. Once the new entity is formed, and all legalities addressed, we would work alongside Government to deliver the project. FF is and always has been service driven. We respectfully remind you of your words “the biggest problem with Meals on Wheels is

Meals on Wheels” we want to develop a service driven partnership with government Peaks have never engaged with services consequently messages delivered contained no consultation. This is a unique way forward to ensure the maximum positive outcomes for older Australians.

- The organisation will be a not for Profit and we already have a commitment from services to cover the setup cost, registration, insurances and some operating money etc.
- The existing software ERP and all the IP should be deemed as Open Source so it can be further developed and made available to all Meals on Wheels Services. We would seek to be the custodians of the OPEN Source IP.
- We will seek corporate partners to develop the IP and support the goals of Future Fit.
- Continued funding of the Future Fit program is not essential but would be appreciated. It will be managed by the new entity through an elected executive and services will contribute their time and expertise.
- The Services involved will be from QLD, NSW, TAS and Services from Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, ACT and will be invited to join to ensure it is a National program.
- The current service managers who make up the Future Fit team have well over 200 years of cumulative experience. That is front line experience.
- The services proposing to take on the Future Fit Program have an estimate net asset base of over \$15M dollars.
- The services are committed to the future of all MOW services across Australia and work well as a team.
- The outcome for the program will be service driven and recognise the diversity of services across regions and states.
- The Services have already contributed to the program for nearly 3 years and are determined to see it through to its completion.

Before making any decisions on who is to take up the challenge of completing Future Fit please give us the opportunity to prepare a submission so that the services who have effectively driven the program can take control and complete it.

On behalf of <sup>s47F</sup> [REDACTED] and the Future Fit Participants

<sup>s47F</sup> [REDACTED]

Spokesperson

Future Fit Feasibility Study Participants.

This document has been released under the  
Freedom of Information Act 1982 by the  
Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

**From:** [CONNOLLY, Thea](#)  
**To:** s47F ["enquiries@futurefitcollective.net.au"](mailto:enquiries@futurefitcollective.net.au)  
**Cc:** s47E(c) s47F  
**Subject:** RE: Open Care Tech announcement [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Date:** Wednesday, 20 March 2024 5:39:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image004.png](#)

Hi s47F

We were surprised to receive this from Minister Well's office given your last email to the minister advised that you would reach out to her further on this to 'share your vision in more detail'. We respectfully request that you hold off on your planned announcement until you have spoken to us about your plan in more detail. We have a range of questions, in particular:

- What specifically does Open Care Tech do, what are the benefits to organisations?
- How is Privacy and data security maintained
- This looks like it could be a duplication of existing software if it only offers basic operational support.
- What tech developers have been engaged to contribute to software development.

Regards

Thea

**Thea Connolly**

**First Assistant Secretary**

Home and Residential Division | Ageing and Aged Care Group

Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care

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PO Box 9848, Canberra ACT 2601, Australia

s47E(c) s47F

*The Department of Health and Aged Care **acknowledges First Nations peoples** as the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to all Elders both past and present.*

***Making flexibility work** - if you receive an email from me outside of normal business hours, I'm sending it at a time that suits me. Unless I reach out to you via phone or text, I'm not expecting you to read or reply until normal business hours.*

**From:** s47F

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 20, 2024 7:32 AM

**To:** Minister Wells <[Minister.Wells@Health.gov.au](mailto:Minister.Wells@Health.gov.au)>; [Minister.Wells@aph.gov.au](mailto:Minister.Wells@aph.gov.au)

**Cc:** s47E(c) s47F

s47E(c) s47F; [enquiries@futurefitcollective.net.au](mailto:enquiries@futurefitcollective.net.au)

**Subject:** Open Care Tech announcement

**REMINDER:** Think before you click! This email originated from outside our organisation. Only click links or open attachments if you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 12.01AM 21 MARCH 2024**

**Dear Minister Wells**

Further to my email to you on 10 February 2024, I am writing to let you know we will be launching Open Care Tech this Thursday 21 March. Our media release which is embargoed until 12.01am Thursday 21 March 2024 is attached for your reference.

Our decision to make the software we helped to develop freely available will not only benefit the wider community but also maximise the impact of the government's investment in Future Fit. We believe that this approach aligns with the objectives of the government to promote accessibility and advance technology, as well as setting a



precedent for further investments to also be shared across the network.

We believe that this collaborative approach will foster innovation, reinforce a strengthened sense of community, drive improvements, and ultimately support our common goal, which is to enhance the quality of in-home care.

Tomorrow, the **Open Care Tech** code base will be available for any vendor, developer, CHSP, HCP or NDIS service provider to use – in whole or part. The only condition being that they similarly make any use or enhancement of the code open and free for others to use.

We have the support of vendors currently providing products to meals on wheels providers, because as anyone experienced in open-source software knows, a vibrant commercial ecosystem is essential to our continued growth and success. We hope that the release of the software as an open-source project will encourage transparency and excellence within the vendor community.

This is the legacy of the Future Fit project and of the efforts meals on wheels services involved in the now abandoned Feasibility Study. It is only due to the commitment of these meals on wheels services that it will now be possible for every aged care provider to benefit from the code, should they want to. Making this software open-source limits the risk of coercion or vendor lock-in or commercially motivated financial barriers to what is essentially a taxpayer funded resource. We hope that **Open Care Tech** sets a precedent for future government technology investments.

We would welcome the addition of an attributable quote from you to include in our media release. We would also like to offer a meeting with you or your office at any time to discuss the work Future Fit Collective and the benefits of **Open Care Tech**.

Kind regards,

s47F



430 Kingsway, Caringbah NSW 2229

T 1300 637 301 M s47F

E s47F

[W sutherlandfoodservices.com.au](http://W.sutherlandfoodservices.com.au)



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