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Transition guidance for providers delivering Support at Home services to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

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Australian Government
**Department of Health,
Disability and Ageing**

Transition to the Support at Home program

This guidance is designed to support aged care providers, including those in rural and remote communities, as they prepare for the transition to Support at Home. It offers practical steps to assist you to meet your responsibilities in ways that are culturally meaningful, trusted by communities, and support trauma-aware and healing-informed care.

Honouring culture, community, and Country and Island Home in care

Older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to receive aged care that is culturally safe, respectful, and person-centred. This includes care that honours the deep connections that older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain with Country and/or Island Home, family and community, and upholds cultural integrity.

Under the new Aged Care Act and the Support at Home program, you are expected to deliver services that reflect these principles. This is not only a regulatory requirement, it is a commitment to ensuring that older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel safe, valued, and understood in their care journey.

Definition of cultural safety in aged care

The following definition has been developed by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council and outlines the principles of cultural safety in aged care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This definition is recognised in the new Aged Care Act and its supporting materials and is captured in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Framework 2025–2035.

Cultural safety in aged care definition

Cultural safety in aged care for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, is understanding one's own culture and the impact that your culture, thinking, and actions may have on the culture of others through ongoing critical self-reflection. Gaining such truthful insight about oneself is critical for ensuring access to a culturally safe, respectful, responsive and racism free aged care system providing for the optimal safety, autonomy, dignity, and absolute wellbeing of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Elders and older people, and their families. Only the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person who is the recipient of a service or interaction can determine whether it is culturally safe.

Aged care service providers and workers must take responsibility for building trust and relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander service users, and their families, and for creating a new aged care system which centres on their living experience, cultural, and ageing needs, as determined by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander service users themselves. The implementation of a trauma aware, healing informed approach to professional practice, and facilitating a greater understanding and respect for individual and collective cultures, histories, knowledges, traditions, stories, and values of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander service users, their families and communities, will greatly support the delivery of a quality and culturally safe aged care system. Aged care service providers must also firmly commit to continuously measure and improve structures and behaviours necessary for cultural safety and quality support to remain embedded in the Australian aged care system.

Delivering culturally safe care through collaboration

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations are leaders in delivering culturally safe care. Their services are locally led, place-based, and tailored to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations and Community-Controlled Health Organisations actively employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff with a focus on local communities, which ensures culturally safe service delivery and consistently stronger outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As a starting point, you are encouraged to build strong partnerships with local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations or local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Land Councils. Working together can strengthen culturally safe care and deepen connections with community, ensuring services are trusted, respectful, and responsive to cultural needs.

Program overview

From 1 November 2025, Support at Home replaces both the Home Care Packages (HCP) Program and the Short-Term Restorative Care (STRC) Programme.

The government is continuing to put in place more reforms to ensure that everyone receives high quality, person-centred care as they age. High quality care and support should be accessible, no matter if you choose to remain at home or move to an aged care home.

Support at Home will provide improved access to services, products, equipment and home adjustments, to help older people stay healthy, active and socially connected to their community.

To prepare for the transition, you should refer to the [Support at Home provider transition guide](#) for general requirements and timelines.

For use alongside the Support at Home program provider transition guide, this guidance offers specific actions that you can take when delivering Support at Home services to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It includes actions to:

1. Prepare to deliver services in a way that upholds the Statement of Rights and is culturally safe. For older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in particular, this includes the right to stay connected with their community, Country and Island Home when receiving services.
2. Understand your obligations to provide culturally safe care under the new Aged Care Act.
3. Learn how the Support at Home program supports older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
4. Facilitate the transition of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the HCP Program to the Support at Home program.

Resources

Below is a list of resources and tools to assist you to complete the actions in this guidance. The links will direct you to the resources on the department's website.

Support at Home

Transition resources and tools	Links or anticipated release timeframe
Support at Home program – Booklet for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and carers	Support at Home program – Booklet for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and carers
Support at Home program manual	Support at Home program manual
Support at Home service list	• Support at Home service list • Support at Home service list FAQs
Assistive Technology and Home Modifications list (AT-HM list)	Assistive Technology and Home Modifications list (AT-HM list)
Support at Home provider training	Support at Home provider training modules
Support at Home program	Fact sheets for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people available soon
LiveUp First Nations resources	• LiveUp First Nations resources webpage • Everyday tools to help Mob Guide

New Aged Care Act

Transition resources and tools	Links
Culturally safe care for older Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people fact sheet	Culturally safe care for older Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people fact sheet
Statement of Rights	• A new rights-based Aged Care Act • Your rights and aged care
Prepare for the new Act – eLearning	• eLearning for aged care providers • eLearning for aged care workers and volunteers
Videos	• Putting your aged care rights first • Supporting your rights and decisions

Transition resources and tools	Links
	• Improving aged care quality • Aged care you can trust

Delivering care to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Transition resources and tools	Links
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Framework 2025-2027	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Framework 2025–2035 Refer to Appendix 1 to view the definition of cultural safety in aged care.
Resources from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission	Aged care for First Nations people on the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission’s website includes a range of resources for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people receiving aged care.
My Aged Care	• Support for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders – My Aged Care • Support for Care Leavers – My Aged Care
Aged Care Diversity Framework and Diversity Action Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people - a guide for providers	Aged Care Diversity Framework Actions to Support Older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: a Guide for Aged Care Providers

Aged care assessment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Transition resources and tools	Links
Single Assessment System for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – Fact sheet	Single Assessment System for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – Fact sheet
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care assessment organisations	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Assessment Organisations Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Support and advocacy organisations

These organisations can provide support for providers and advocacy, cultural guidance, and practical support to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Organisation	Description
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Health Organisations	Locally led Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations can support you to deliver more inclusive, respectful, and effective care. You are encouraged to build strong partnerships with local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations or Local Aboriginal Land Councils.
Elder Care Support program	Through the Elder Care Support program, Elder Care Support workers provide face-to-face support to assist older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people navigate and access aged care services and provide referrals to other services as necessary, including health and disability supports. Types of support could include: • providing information about aged care services and programs • completing documentation to access aged care services • providing support throughout the aged care assessment process • assisting in the choice of a provider and discuss care preferences • advocating to assessors and providers on behalf of the participant • providing support to access services for other types of health needs, such as disability supports. Also see: • Elder Care Support program • List of Elder Care Support Providers

Organisation	Description
Care finders	Care finders is a free service that exists to support people who have no one else who can support them to learn about, apply for and set up support services. There are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focussed care finders nationally, which can be identified through the My Aged Care Help from a care finder .
Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)	OPAN delivers advocacy, information and education services to older people. OPAN has Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates available through the OPAN national network .
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council (NATSIAACC)	NATSIAACC is a national member-based aged care peak body that represents the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations in aged care.

Provider support

Support	Description
Rural, Remote and First Nations Aged Care Service Development Assistance Panel (SDAP)	SDAP provides free professional support to providers who: • are in rural or remote areas (MMM4 to MMM7), or • provide care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. SDAP can help prepare you for the transition to Support at Home. SDAP panel members are qualified and experienced professionals who work with you in areas such as: • clinical care • financial and workforce planning • governance and regulation • policies and procedures • training. SDAP provides culturally appropriate support to all providers delivering care to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Support	Description
	Rural, Remote and First Nations Aged Care Service Development Assistance Panel (SDAP)
Support at Home Thin Markets grant	The Support at Home Thin Markets grant helps ensure the availability of Support at Home aged care services in rural and remote Australia, and for people with diverse backgrounds and life experiences in all areas, including older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Eligible providers operating in rural and remote areas, or providing specialist services in all areas, may be able to apply for additional funding to support their financial viability and ensure service continuity for their clients. Register on Grant Connect and select your notification preferences to be informed when relevant grant opportunities are announced: Become a Registered User.

Provider actions

1. Prepare to deliver services in a way that upholds the Statement of Rights and is culturally safe

The new Aged Care Act starts from 1 November 2025 and will put the rights of older people at the centre of the aged care system. A key feature of the Act is the Statement of Rights which outlines what older people should expect when seeking or accessing government-funded aged care services.

The Statement of Rights recognises that older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

- have a right to access aged care services that are culturally safe, trauma aware and healing informed
- have the right to stay connected with their community, Country and Island Home
- have the right to have their identity, culture, spirituality and diversity valued and supported.

#	Actions	Timeframe	Transition resources and tools
1.1	Establish practices to ensure the delivery of aged care services is compatible with the Statement of Rights. By embedding the Statement of Rights in your organisations' processes you will ensure care delivery is in alignment with the needs and preferences of care recipients.	Now – October 2025	About the new rights-based Aged Care Act A new Aged Care Act for the rights of older people – a summary of the rights older people have when accessing aged care services. eLearning for providers to better understand the changes in the new Aged Care Act: • Module 1: Understanding and adapting to the Aged Care Act 2024, which includes information on embedding the Statement of Rights and Principles into practice, and

#	Actions	Timeframe	Transition resources and tools
			• Module 2: Aligning to changes – implementing the Aged Care Act 2024, which includes information on rights-based care and operational responsibility.
1.2	Ensure your workforce understands the Statement of Rights and the obligation you have to uphold the rights of older people. By supporting your workforce to understand the Statement of Rights you will improve the delivery of quality and safe aged care that is inclusive of an older person's preferences.	Now – October 2025	A new rights-based Aged Care Act – a summary of the rights older people have when accessing aged care services. This fact sheet can be shared with your workforce. eLearning for aged care workers to better understand the changes in the new Aged Care Act: • Module 1: Understanding and adapting to the Aged Care Act 2024, which includes information on rights-based, person-centred care, and • Module 2: Aligning to changes – implementing the Aged Care Act 2024, which includes information on putting the rights-based framework into practice

2. Understand your obligations to provide culturally safe care under the new Aged Care Act

The new Aged Care Act aims to make aged care better for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It is an obligation of your condition of registration that your organisation is accessible, including for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. You are required to be able to deliver culturally safe, trauma informed and healing informed care.

#	Actions	Timeframe	Transition resources and tools
2.1	Understand and familiarise yourself with the definition of cultural safety in aged care for Elders and older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Work with them (and their families) to help define and meet their experience expectations of high-quality, safe aged care services, including their cultural needs.	Now – October 2025	See the full definition of cultural safety in aged care in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Framework 2025–2035, Appendix 1. See the definition and principles of cultural safety in the Aged Care Bill’s Statement of Rights and supporting materials - Explanatory Memorandum of the Aged Care Bill.
2.2	Ensure your organisation and workforce can apply the principles of culturally safe, trauma aware and healing informed care in line with your commitments under the new Aged Care Act.	Now – October 2025	See The new Aged Care Act – Culturally safe care for older Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people fact sheet. eLearning for aged care providers to better understand the changes in the new Aged Care Act: • Module 2: Aligning to changes – implementing the Aged Care Act 2024, which includes information on culturally safe practice in service design. eLearning for aged care workers to better understand the changes in the new Aged Care Act:

#	Actions	Timeframe	Transition resources and tools
			• Module 2: Aligning to changes – implementing the Aged Care Act 2024, which includes information on delivering culturally safe and inclusive care.

3. Learn how the Support at Home program can support older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Under Support at Home, eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 years and over can access services, products, equipment and home adjustments. This will assist them to remain healthy, active and socially connected to their community.

#	Actions	Timeframe	Transition resources and tools
3.1	Learn about how the Support at Home program will operate and how services are delivered, including services for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	Now	See the Support at Home program manual for specific guidance on delivering care to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and interactions with other programs and schemes. See Support at Home provider training, including specific guidance for providing care to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: • Support at Home Program Overview training module • Module 1: Assessment process and service delivery • Module 2: Service agreement, care plan and budget planning • Module 3: Short-term pathways • Module 4: Claiming and payment arrangements • Module 5: Care management

#	Actions	Timeframe	Transition resources and tools
			Module 6: Self-management
3.2	Understand how older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can access an assessment. Advise people they can register their preference to receive an aged care assessment from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander assessment organisation. Understand how older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can access Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Assessment Organisations. Know that if an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander assessment organisation isn't available, older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can still receive an assessment from any organisation in the Single Assessment System. Know what support is available for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the assessment process to assist them feel more culturally safe.	Now – Ongoing	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Assessment Organisations All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander assessment organisations will be listed on the Single Assessment System list of Assessment Organisations. Organisations will be rolled out in a phased approach commencing with a pilot in August 2025. Stay up to date on what is available in your region.
3.3	Learn about specific supports available to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people eligible for the Support at Home program. This includes: The care management supplement, which provides 12 additional hours of care management activities	Now – October 2025	Support at Home program manual – for information on the care management supplement. Assistive Technology and Home Modifications list – for assistive technology to support cultural activities.

#	Actions	Timeframe	Transition resources and tools
	per year to ensure Support at Home services optimise older people's safety, health, wellbeing and quality of life • Access to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners and Health Workers to deliver their Support at Home services. • Support to participate in cultural commitments, including transport • Access to assistive technology to support continued participation in cultural practices such as hunting, fishing, camping and caravanning through the AT-HM scheme • Translation and interpretation services if needed. Consider how you can deliver the Support at Home services for which the older person has been assessed as eligible, in a way that supports them to maintain connection to Country and/or Island Home, for example transport, flexible service delivery on-Country, and recognition of cultural responsibilities.		Support at Home service list – for the services available under the Support at Home program.
3.4	Review resources to support the delivery of end-of-life services for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people under the Support at Home End-of-Life Pathway. Consider how your organisation will integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of caring in end-of-life	Now – October 2025	• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Palliative Care Resources Palliative Care Australia • Gwandalan National Palliative Care Project • Indigenous Program of Experience (IPEPA)

#	Actions	Timeframe	Transition resources and tools
	services, including family-led models, cultural ceremony, and returning to Country and/or Island Home where possible.		
3.5	Understand how older people can apply for a fee reduction supplement, if needed. The fee reduction supplement offers financial assistance to participants experiencing financial hardship who cannot pay their Support at Home contributions due to their financial circumstances.	Now – Ongoing	Financial hardship assistance on My Aged Care. The Aged Care Claim for financial hardship assistance form (SA462) is available on the Services Australia website.

4. Facilitate the transition of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the HCP Program to the Support at Home program

You have an ongoing requirement to communicate and consult with older people about the care and services they receive, such as changes to services, costs and fees. You need to support care partners to engage with HCP care recipients to discuss the transition to Support at Home.

#	Actions	Timeframe	Transition resources and tools
4.1	Assist HCP care recipients understand their rights under the Statement of Rights. • Discuss what the Statement of Rights means for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing aged care • Support HCP care recipients to understand the Statement of Rights in the context of the care they are receiving to ensure their needs and preferences are met. This includes the right to stay connected with their community, Country and Island Home. • Ensure HCP care recipients understand how they can raise a complaint if they have a concern about their rights.	June – October 2025 (and ongoing from November 2025)	About the new rights-based Aged Care Act These resources can be shared with older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: • Your rights and aged care fact sheet • Putting your aged care rights first video • Supporting your rights and decisions video

#	Actions	Timeframe	Transition resources and tools
4.2	Care partners discuss the Support at Home changes with HCP care recipients, including changes to their care plans and service agreements. • Discuss how HCP care recipients will transition to the Support at Home program and review changes to pricing, and care plans and service agreements. The care plan must reflect the care recipient's preferences for receiving care and services. • Share resources developed for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and carers explaining the Support at Home program. • Ensure participants understand they can access specific supports under the Support at Home program if they need, including: ○ Support to participate in cultural commitments, including transport ○ Access to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners and Health Workers ○ Access to assistive technology to participate in cultural activities through the AT-HM Scheme ○ Access to translation or interpretation services if needed.	June – October 2025	Guidance for Support at Home care partners includes key messages for transitioning HCP care recipients. The following resources have been developed for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and their families and carers: • Support at Home Program – A guide for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, families and carers • Support at Home fact sheets for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people available soon • LiveUp First Nations resources webpage • Everyday tools to help Mob to learn about different low-cost assistive products