



National Aged Care Advisory Council

Meeting Communique – 17 September

Aged Care Reform Priorities

Council welcomes progress toward the Aged Care Act's implementation on 1 November 2025 and awaits the finalised Rules. Attention is now focused on the post-implementation phase and Council is aware of the important role sector peak bodies, Council of the Ageing and Older Persons Advocacy Network, are playing by hosting national implementation forums to provide clear, ongoing information and communications to aged care participants, workers, and providers.

Council is committed to providing leadership with structured, timely feedback to the Department in the coming months.

Higher Everyday Living Fee – evaluation approach

Council considered a proposed approach for evaluation of the Higher Everyday Living Fee (HELFF).

Council supports an evaluation framework that robustly protects equity and quality for all aged care residents, identifies gaps in standards and services, and provides transparent and ongoing feedback.

Council advised the importance of ensuring that all aged care residents clearly understand the HELFF, specifically, that it is a voluntary extra and no one can be required to enter a HELFF agreement as a condition of entry to residential care. This is an important protection, and Council noted the evaluation should assess whether residents are ever required or pressured to enter HELFF agreements as a condition of entry to residential care.

Council plan to have further discussion about HELFF, once the department's guidance document is made available.

Deep Dive discussion – Workforce training and quality

Council has focused on workforce matters at several meetings. On this occasion, members undertook a deep dive into the personal care workforce, including best practice training and skill development as well as options for a national register of aged care personal care workers.

Council strongly supports fast-tracking a national registration scheme to:

- Establish the state of the workforce now and inform future workforce planning.
- Support professionalisation of the workforce.
- Benefit workforce and employers as a portable 'working passport' for aged care by capturing qualifications and screening compliance.

Update on the disability sector and priorities

Council was pleased to meet with Robyn Shannon, Deputy Secretary, Disability and Carers Group to discuss sector priorities and identify synergies that arise from bringing this work into the same portfolio as ageing and aged care, and health.

Opportunities noted by members for potential inter-sectoral collaboration include:

- Equity between systems across the life course.
- Common workforce registration.
- pricing arrangements.
- Approaches to supported decision making

Single Assessment System

Council received an update on the roll-out of the Single Assessment System (SAS) workforce since its commencement in December 2024. Council noted the Department is working to resolve issues that include:

Wait times: Delays for assessment and reassessment to be undertaken by contracted assessment organisations that are impacting timely access to care.

Triage process: Misunderstandings about the triage process are causing inefficiencies for both staff and older people.

Telephone assessments: Telephone assessments are less suitable than face to face assessments for older people with cognitive, hearing, or language difficulties. While reducing backlogs is important, Council noted that telephone assessments must be used judiciously to avoid compromising quality outcomes.