



Council of Elders

Meeting Communique – 10 and 11 September 2025

Aged Care Reform and Implementation Priorities – Council congratulates the Government on the passage of the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Aged Care (Accommodation Payment Security) Levy Amendment Bill. Council recognises that this enables the finalisation of the Rules, and members look forward to the Aged Care Act coming into force on 1 November 2025 and the release of the home care packages before that date.

Fees and Contributions – From 1 November 2025, a new Higher Everyday Living Fee (HELF) will begin in residential aged care. The fee is designed to give residents more choice if they wish to pay for extra services such as special meals or extra activities. Council discussed the protections in place including:

- Services must be clearly agreed to and in writing before you pay (except for small things like buying coffee on site)
- Services cannot be bundled together without also being offered separately.

Council expressed concerns some people may not be able to afford extra services and emphasised it is important all residents continue to receive high-quality care, whether or not they can pay for extras.

Support at Home – The Government has recently announced the release of an additional 20,000 home care packages ahead of 1 November 2025 to help reduce waiting times. Council welcome this, but noted there will still be queues, and workforce shortages may limit how quickly services can be provided.

Council also discussed the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and members believe social support services such as group activities and community concerns should continue as they are very important for connection of older people and their wellbeing.

Single Assessment System – The new single assessment tool aims to simplify assessments for aged care. Council discussed the concerns about delays, confusion around phone assessments and uncertainty about the process. Council reiterated it is important for older people, along with families and carers to receive a copy of their assessment and have an opportunity to correct any errors. Under the new rules, nominated supporters can also get a copy.

Hospital Discharge Delays – Council raised concerns that some older people are staying in hospital longer than needed because it is hard to find a place in residential care. This can be particularly challenging for people with advanced dementia or complex needs.

Council stressed that older people should not be blamed for these delays. Federal and state governments are working on local solutions but more needs to be done. Council suggested sharing real stories from older people to help highlight the ongoing challenges.

Access to GPs in Aged Care – Council discussed the shortage of General Practitioners (GPs) in aged care, particularly aged care residential homes. The Department discussed with Council, the General Practice in Aged Care Incentive, which is designed to improve GP services in aged care. Early evaluation results of this incentive show some improvements, but many residents still lose their usual GP when moving into care. Families often play a key role in helping older people keep ongoing GP support.

There continue to be challenges in attracting and retaining GPs, particularly in rural and regional areas. Council believes this issue requires close and ongoing monitoring as access to a GP in aged care homes is essential for delivering safe consistent and high-quality care.

The next Council of Elders meeting will be held 21-22 October 2025.