



Council of Elders

Meeting Communique – 10-11 December 2025

Minister Visit

Council welcomed the Hon. Sam Rae MP, Minister for Aged Care and Seniors, to his first meeting of Council of Elders since 1 November 2025 implementation of the *Aged Care Act 2024*.

Minister Rae thanked the 8 outgoing members of Council for their contribution and significant impact during their terms. Outgoing members include:

- Ms Valma Fell OAM, Ms Gillian Groom AO, Ms Gwenda Darling, Aunty Lyn Cullinane, Ms Lynda (Lyn) Whiteway, Ms Juliet (Julie) Rankin, Ms Anna Harrison AM and Dr John Davis.

Aged Care Reform and Implementation Priorities – Council discussed the significant work underway to deliver aged care reform. Members were pleased implementation is progressing well, noting that several changes effective from 1 November 2025, such as improved access to end-of-life care at home under Support at Home, are being received positively by older people.

Council strongly supports the Department's and the Commission's actions to increase provider compliance with publishing prices on My Aged Care. Price transparency is essential to helping older people make informed decisions during negotiation and signing of new service agreements.

Harmonisation – Council noted the Productivity Commission's interim report, which highlighted any move to align regulation across aged care, disability support and veterans' care will require careful consideration of timing given the large reform agenda already underway. Members emphasised the importance of focusing on simple, early steps to avoid overwhelming the sector.

Council supports harmonisation where it reduces duplication and administrative burden. Members also noted that while harmonisation registration may help workers move between sectors, noting pay rate differences continue to create barriers.

Market and Workforce update – Council discussed data and trends on workforce challenges, thin markets, First Nations aged care and national reporting efforts. Members recognised the ongoing difficulties in delivering services in rural and remote communities and supported work to strengthen training, expand the workforce and improve access to new facilities.

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner and Complaints Commissioner – Council welcomed newly appointed Aged Care Complaints Commissioner, Ms Treasure Jennings, and Ms Liz Hefren-Webb, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner.

Ms Jennings outlined her commitment to a complaints system that is simple, transparent and focused on improving care. Council welcomed her emphasis on actioning older people's rights and looks forward to hearing how rights issues are reflected in the complaints data.

Members will continue engaging with both Commissioners in 2026, noting that close collaboration between their offices is essential to ensuring quality and safety for older people.

Support at Home – Council discussed feedback from older people on Support at Home pricing, including limited visibility of prices and increases that appear unreasonable. The Department advised monitoring is underway and any concerns can be referred to the Commission.

Members discussed “interim places” and noted this is not well understood. Council welcomed advice that interim funding will not be allocated if an older person is approved for:

- an ongoing classification and placed in the urgent priority category in the Support at Home Priority System; or
- the Restorative Care Pathway or End-of-Life Pathway.

People placed in the urgent priority category will be assigned a place within one month and those accessing end-of-life or restorative care will be assigned a place immediately.

Council noted some ongoing confusion about the Support at Home service list, particularly for people moving from CHSP.

Commonwealth Home Support Program – Council reinforced the ongoing value of CHSP, especially its contribution to essential services which as transport, delivered meals, respite, day programs and social activities that help maintain independence and social connection.

Members emphasised that CHSP plays a vital role in preventing isolation, supporting mental health, and keeping older people well and connected. Council discussed future funding approaches and suggests a pathway combining grant funding and fee-for-service may be a solution. Council plans to be a part of future discussions on CHSP.

Accommodation Pricing Review – Council met with Mr Nigel Ray RSM and Associate Professor Nicole Sutton, who are leading the Residential Aged Care Accommodation Pricing Review. Council highlighted the strong links between the residential aged care system, hospitals and Support at Home, and stressed the need for integrated co-design to support continuity of care and more equitable access. Members look forward to the outcomes of consultation and any recommendations that impact older people.

Members noted that limited supply of places in Residential Aged Care Homes in many areas, particularly in rural and remote regions, restricts choice and often results in older people accepting placements that do not meet their preferences. Shortages also mean people may be placed far from family and community, increasing isolation and reducing cultural safety.

The next Council of Elders meeting will be held in February 2026.