



Council of Elders

Meeting Communique – 21 and 22 October 2025

Aged Care Act 2024 – Council is looking forward to the new Aged Care Act starting on 1 November 2025. The recent registration of the Aged Care Rules 2025 and the soon to be finalised transitional rules are big steps forward.

Council acknowledged that some uncertainty remains in the community about the new Support at Home program. The key message is that the Government's priority is to make sure people keep getting the care they need, without interruption.

Council welcomed the appointment of Ms Treasure Jennings as the new Aged Care Complaints Commissioner. Having an independent commissioner means that people have someone they can trust to listen and act if things go wrong.

Working with Disability and Carer Programs – Council was pleased to hear about the work of the Disability and Carer Programs, which are now part of the Health, Disability and Ageing portfolio. We can see lots of opportunities to work together, sharing what's working well for participants, looking at how people move between systems, and exploring how services can be better connected.

Support at Home – Access to reliable transport plays a key role in helping older people stay active and independent. We've heard from older people that transport can be a challenge, especially when they have previously moved from the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) to a Home Care Package.

Some older people have told us they have lost access to low-cost community transport and instead need to use cab vouchers, which can be more expensive, especially in regional and rural areas. Council sees this as an opportunity to better understand transport needs and explore funding options to keep transport affordable.

Commonwealth Home Support Program – Council discussed the importance of being involved early in the planning for the future of CHSP. We know CHSP will continue until at least 30 June 2027 and will come under the Aged Care Act 2024 from 1 November 2025. This provides time to review what is working well – such as how CHSP helps people stay connected to their communities and to identify areas for improvement. Council will continue to keep CHSP on its agenda throughout 2026 and provide regular updates on progress.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Assessments – Council was pleased to receive an update on the range of initiatives being undertaken to improve aged care outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Members strongly endorse the commitment to make the aged care system more culturally safe, trauma aware and healing informed. Council discussed aspects of the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care

assessment organisations pilot, including the importance of appropriate mechanisms for managing potential conflicts of interest. Council looks forward to further updates on the learnings from the pilot in early 2026, as well as a deeper discussion on training for cultural safety and trauma informed awareness. Council will gather relevant intelligence from our networking and community engagement activities and share this with the department.

Dementia and Healthy Ageing – Council acknowledges how much dementia affects older people and their families. We were delighted to meet with Professor Tanya Buchanan, CEO of Dementia Australia to talk about how we can make a difference. Professor Buchanan spoke about the importance of prevention, early support, and community awareness. Members agreed that looking after brain health and preventing dementia fits well with our focus on healthy ageing. We look forward to future conversations on how these areas can be linked.

Designing Aged Care for First Nations Communities – Council commended the Department for its strong progress on developing draft guidance for designing culturally centered aged care homes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Members provided suggestions to further strengthen the guidance, including practical examples and further highlighting cultural safety and trauma-informed care. Council was pleased to see that the direction is to develop design solutions in partnership with local communities to ensure designs reflect the unique culture and needs of each place.

The next meeting of the Council of Elders will be held on the 10th and 11th December 2025.