

National Aged Care Advisory Council

Meeting Communique – 19 November 2025

Minister Visit

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

Minister Rae was interested in hearing feedback from the sector which included a positive shift in workforce attitudes under the new Act, with strong support for the rights-based approach and whistleblower protections. These changes are seen as improving recognition of staff roles and encouraging openness. Challenges remain around fee transparency, compliance pressures on providers, increased administrative tasks reducing direct care time, and gaps in training around new arrangements and fees.

Aged Care Reform Priorities

Council received an update on aged care reform implementation priorities following the 1 November changes. Members sought clarification on how home support package wait times are reported post-implementation, particularly for those already waiting before the transition. Feedback highlighted concerns about reporting and system integrity, with the Department noting increased activity at the Contact Centre and collaboration with providers to ensure connectivity and smooth operations.

Discussion then focused on pricing transparency and compliance. Members expressed concern that only a portion of providers had uploaded prices, limited consumer choice and creating pressure on older people to sign agreements without comparison. The Department reported progress on price publication and outlined steps for regulatory enforcement. Additional updates included legislative reform progress, an upcoming amendment bill, and commitments to return with details on reporting expectations under the *Aged Care Act 2024*.

Accommodation Pricing Review

Council discussed the accommodation supplement review and shared feedback on the current system. Members also discussed the challenges associated with the current pricing structure and highlighted pressures from rising construction costs and options to support building new services for residents with higher needs. Members emphasised the need to address financial sustainability while planning for an ageing population and increasing dementia care needs. The conversation concluded with recognition that design and regulation must align to achieve quality care outcomes, and members expressed interest in receiving further updates as the review progresses.

Linking Care Minutes to Funding Measure

Council acknowledged the care minute supplement's goal of aligning funding with care delivery and noted concerns raised by some providers about penalising providers slightly under target. Members opposed adding further tolerance, warning it could encourage under-delivery. Instead, they recommended refining the supplement to reward full or above-target care delivery, while maintaining quality and person-centred care. Council also welcomed further discussions on outcome-based incentives, innovation, workforce, and training.

Delayed Discharge of Older Patients

Council was interested in the work being undertaken to mitigate delayed hospital discharges, with the Department reporting the absence of a nationally consistent definition prevents accurate reporting and a wholistic understanding of the issue. Work to establish a nationally consistent definition is currently underway across jurisdictions. The Department emphasised a shift in language to avoid terms that place blame on older people, focusing instead on systemic interface issues. Additional challenges include increasing complexity within this cohort and the need to upskill mainstream residential providers to be able to care for older people with complex needs and behaviours.

Harmonisation Agenda

The Department provided an overview of regulatory harmonisation work, referencing the Productivity Commission draft as a starting point for feedback. Members discussed the significant changes already experienced in aged care and expressed concern that introducing further reforms now would be overwhelming. They highlighted differences between aged care, disability, and childcare sectors but noted potential opportunities for alignment, such as intergenerational care.

Challenges for providers operating across multiple sectors were acknowledged, along with the need to consider scope and industrial awards if aligning provider and worker registration. Suggestions included creating a common worker registry with transferable qualifications to address workforce shortages and ensuring consistency in audit and compliance requirements, such as smarter care minutes and focused SIRS reporting.

Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) – Future Reform Options

Council agreed CHSP should remain a standing agenda item to ensure ongoing discussion. Council discussed plans for options to transition the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) into the Support at Home Program, noting the Government's public commitment that this occur no sooner than 1 July 2027. Council members expressed concern about shifting to activity-based funding due to volatility and its impact on revenue streams. Members raised challenges such as capital investment for community transport and the importance of maintaining social connection services, warning that these could be lost if funding structures change.

Aged Care Complaints Commissioner – Introduction to Council

The Aged Care Complaints Commissioner attended Council for the first time and provided a summary of her expertise which covered complaints and dispute resolution, and experience across the pillars of social cohesion. The Commissioner provided an overview of the complaints process and emphasised the importance of moving beyond legislative compliance to a rights-based approach that connects with people's experiences of care. The discussion highlighted the need for systemic understanding of rights, continuous improvement, and education to ensure rights are universally understood.