



# Council of Elders

## Meeting Communique – 18-19 February 2026

The Hon Sam Rae MP welcomed nine new members to Council, bringing new experience and ideas. Members appreciated the Minister's guidance on the Council's role and reaffirmed their commitment to providing practical, evidence-based advice to support aged care reforms.

Council discussed key issues across Support at Home and the Commonwealth Home Support Program, including the Single Assessment System. Noting the equity issues which were prevalent under previous arrangements, members noted ongoing challenges with the Integrated Assessment Tool, including inconsistent assessor training which results in differing assessments, limited access to clinical information, and delays that pose risks for older people with rapidly changing health needs. Members also identified opportunities to improve communication with general practitioners should a person's situation change.

Concerns were raised about access to social supports under Support at Home, including community confusion about eligibility, provider registration, and group activity funding. Council emphasised the importance of social connection for healthy ageing and the need for clearer guidance, better communication materials, and reduced administrative burden on small providers.

Council reviewed proposed updates to the My Aged Care Provider tool and noted significant progress toward greater transparency, with new Support at Home finance and operations data to be available from early 2027. Members will provide further feedback at future meetings.

Council welcomed the forthcoming updated Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People. Members noted progress in aged care, including strengthened Quality Standards and staff training, and supported the inclusion of cultural and spiritual abuse in the updated plan. Council also welcomed new research on elder abuse in First Nations, LGBTIQ+, regional, and cognitively impaired populations, as well as initiatives to address financial elder abuse.

Council received a briefing on the Greater Choice for At Home Palliative Care Program and strongly supported its focus on coordinated, locally tailored palliative care, including in residential aged care settings. Members expressed the need for 24-hour support and highlighted the importance of aligning palliative care with Support at Home to avoid gaps in end-of-life services.

Council met with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and the Aged Care Complaints Commissioner, acknowledging their critical role in safeguarding older people. Members welcomed improvements under the Aged *Care Act 2024*, such as enhanced complaints processes and whistleblower protections. Council emphasised the need for an accessible, trusted complaints system and recognised the essential role of support people in navigating the aged care system. Council looks forward to continued engagement to ensure the voices of older Australians remain central to aged care reform.