



Australian Government
**Department of Health,
Disability and Ageing**

Information Brief
MB25-000888
Version (1)
Date sent to MO: 20/06/2025

To: Minister Rae

Subject: ADVICE TO MINISTER: COUNCIL OF ELDERS MEETING OF 18 JUNE 2025

Comments:			
Contact Officer:	Leanne DeWinter	A/g Assistant Secretary, Councils and Engagement Branch	Ph: (02) 5132 S22 Mobile: S22
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Key Issues:

The Council of Elders met on 18 June 2025. Advice to you following the meeting, from the Chair on behalf of Council, is at (**Attachment A**).

Background:

The Council of Elders was established in response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety to ensure that the voices of older people were provided to the Australian Government on a range of matters, including implementation of the aged care reforms.

Sensitivities:

The advice provided to the Minister is more detailed than the information provided to the public in the Communiques, which can be viewed online once published, at www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/aged-care-council-of-elders-communiques.

Consultation:

The advice was informed by discussions with departmental business areas.

Attachments:

A. Council of Elders – Advice Summary – 18 June 2025

Minister	Minister Rae
PDR Number	MB25-000792
Subject	Department Initiated Information Brief: Council of Elders Advice to Minister Meeting - Meeting of 18 June 2025
Contact Officer	Leanne DeWinter Ph: (02) 5132 S22 Mobile: S22
Clearance Officer	Nick Hartland Ph: (02) 5132 S22 Mobile: S22
Division/Branch	Ageing and Aged Care Systems, Engagement and Contributions Division
Has Budget Branch been consulted if there are financial implications?	Not Applicable

Adviser/DLO comments:	Returned to Dept for: REDRAFT ☐ NFA ☐
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Council of Elders - 18 June 2025

Attachment A

Advice to Minister Rae

Reform Implementation

Council welcomed the update on the revised timelines following the 1 November 2025 implementation announcement and acknowledged the additional time needed to address known implementation risks and extend sector support. Members noted the focus on communication, workforce training, and readiness monitoring.

Members highlighted ongoing community and provider confusion, particularly around the release of information and access to homecare packages ahead of 1 November 2025. Council reiterated the importance of timely high-quality resources for providers, care partners and older people ahead of implementation.

The Council further highlighted an increased need for face-to-face engagement to support community understanding of legislative reforms, noting this can strengthen the reach and clarity of messaging.

Fees and Contributions

Council reiterated the importance of maintaining genuine consumer choice and protecting the rights of older people. Members emphasised the need for simple, clear service agreements that are accessible to all older Australians.

The Department provided clarification on the policy implications of the deferred implementation date, confirming that while the policy intent remains unchanged, the additional time will support stronger sector preparedness.

Further discussion was held on the complexities of means testing and the use of personal information in assessing fees and contributions.

Council welcomed the Department's commitment to developing a workable solution and reinforced the need for older people to be provided with clear, accurate, and timely information before being asked to sign service agreements.

National Aged Care Design Principles and Guidelines

Council welcomed the update on the National Aged Care Design Principles and Guidelines and reiterated the importance of embedding design excellence as a core element of aged care quality.

Members acknowledged the Department's activities to promote provider uptake and consumer awareness, noting that good design is integral to wellbeing, safety, and dignity.

The Department stated that the principles were designed by collating existing information, as a starting point and will be continually updating the principles and guidelines moving forward. Members noted the challenges for residents including those in rural and remote communities, and the importance of consultation locally.

The guidelines are intended to be implemented flexibly to meet cultural needs. Council strongly supported the development of culturally appropriate residential design guidance for First Nations people and offered to engage further in the co-design process.

Council looks forward to working closely with the department on these principles and their implementation.

Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP)

Council sought clarity on the operation of CHSP including the issues emerging since the announcement that the new Aged Care Act implementation is to be delayed.

Council has heard examples where CHSP services are reported to have ceased due to a lack of funding. Concerns relating to community transport funded through CHSP, including the demand for services, was raised. The Department clarified that service contracts are being negotiated, and although some services are being relinquished, discontinuation of services is not anticipated.

Council of Elders - 18 June 2025

Council reported hearing there is some confusion about communications relating to sector support providers and CHSP, particularly the extension of contracts for 12 months, commencing 1 July whilst consultation is undertaken. This includes changes effective from 1 July versus new Act implementation from 1 November.

The Department reported a strong response to contract renewals, with some providers choosing to exit however new providers being engaged. Council reported the value placed on many CHSP funded programs by older people and the need for them to be flexible to local need and appropriately funded.

Council is keen to be involved in future discussions about CHSP and to assist in communicating any changes.

Support at Home

The Department thanked Council for their ongoing advice on the program. Council is pleased to hear a further rollout of material will shortly be provided to ensure clear and accurate information is provided ahead of implementation.

Supported Decision Making

Council provided strong support of the registered supporter role under the new Aged Care Act as a progressive step toward embedding supported decision-making (SDM) in aged care practice.

Members emphasised the importance of maintaining older people's autonomy and rights, especially during significant care transitions.

Members acknowledged the dissemination and monitoring of resources should remain the primary responsibility of the Department, and given the complexities, suggest information in the form of an easy read would be valuable.

Training and awareness initiatives targeting both providers and community organisations to ensure correct application and understanding of the registered supporter role would also be beneficial.

Council noted the complexity of understanding the relationship between Commonwealth and State and Territory legislation to support decision making.

Members are committed to promoting the SDM approach through its networks.

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By The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing



Australian Government

**Department of Health,
Disability and Ageing**

Information Brief

MB25-001233

Version (1)

Date sent to MO: 20/08/2025

To: Minister Rae

Subject: ADVICE TO MINISTER: COUNCIL OF ELDERS MEETING OF 13 AUGUST 2025

Comments:			
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Clearance Officer:	Adriana Platona	First Assistant Secretary, Residential Care Division	Ph: (02) 5132 S22 Mobile: S22

Key Issues:

The Council of Elders met on 13 August 2025. Advice to you following each meeting, from the Chair on behalf of Council, is at **Attachment A**. The next meeting of the Council is on 10- 11 September 2025.

Background:

The Council of Elders was established in response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety to ensure that the voices of older people were provided to the Australian Government on a range of matters, including implementation of the aged care reforms.

Sensitivities:

The advice provided to the Minister is more detailed than the information provided to the public in the Communiques, which can be viewed online, once published, at www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/aged-care-council-of-elders-communiques.

Consultation:

The advice was informed by discussions with Department of Health, Disability and Ageing business areas.

Attachments:

A. Council of Elders – Advice Summary – 13 August 2025

Minister	Minister Rae
PDR Number	MB25-000792
Subject	Department Initiated Information Brief: Council of Elders Advice to Minister Meeting - Meeting of 13 August 2025
Contact Officer	Alice Creelman Ph: (02) 5132 S22 Mobile: S22
Clearance Officer	Adriana Platona Ph: (02) 5132 S22 Mobile: S22
Division/Branch	Ageing and Aged Care Systems, Engagement and Contributions Division
Has Budget Branch been consulted if there are financial implications?	Not Applicable

Adviser/DLO comments:	Returned to Dept for: REDRAFT ☐ NFA ☐
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Attachment A - Advice to Minister

Aged Care Reform and Implementation Priorities

Council was pleased to receive an update on implementation activities leading up to the commencement of the new Aged Care Act on 1 November 2025, including the work undertaken by the Transition Taskforce. Council recognises the importance of connectivity and digital literacy in improving the efficiency of access and transfer of information within the aged care system. However, members continue to be informed of situations where the needs of majority of individuals cannot be met by digital channels and are concerned that this is not sufficiently recognised in interactions between workers and participants. Common sense and understanding a person and their particular circumstances need to be emphasised in training of assessors and providers.

The move to single assessments, which is supported, has also increased the proportion of assessments conducted by phone, which can be unsatisfactory. Another issue of continuing concern to Council is that all assessments should be viewed by participants for accuracy before they are entered into the system – there are many cases known to Council members where incorrect data has been recorded.

Aged Care Act 2024

Council has provided a submission to the Inquiry by the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee on the current Aged Care Amendment Bills and looks forward to the prompt passage of the Bills.

Members noted they hear community concerns about automation of decision making and welcomed the clarification of the safeguards in the legislation for these situations.

Communications and Engagement

Council members have continued an extensive program of attendance at events around the country, including attendance at 32 key events in the six months to June 2025, as well as webinars, podcasts, radio interviews, Residential Aged Care visits, and local networking events. We have heard a broad range of views from older people at these events as well as through our diverse networks, and we ensure that these views are communicated to decision makers in the Department. We also identify gaps in communication and convey these as soon as we become aware of them. Members of the Council of Elders are regularly sought out to attend events and provide information on aged care reforms.

Commonwealth Home Support Program

The Department provided an update on action being taken to reach the cohort of people receiving CHSP services who have not received an Aged Care Assessment and who will need an assessment to continue to receive services after 1 November 2025, when the Act comes into effect. Members are aware of many of these participants, and the reasons why they may not have had assessments. Members recognise that this is a key challenge to be addressed and are available to work with the Department on this. There are complex issues in relation to people who have received community nursing services as an urgent time limited intervention but may not require continuing care under CHSP and are therefore not registered.

Members also recognise the value of social support services for older people and continue to raise concern about the future funding of this activity stream through CHSP. This is part of Council's broader concerns about the future of CHSP, and we are keen to be involved in this discussion and suggest solutions to make sure the future design is right.

Support at Home

Council welcomed the publication of the Service Agreement template and guidance.

Overall, Council is aware of continued confusion in the community about the new Support at Home arrangements on 1 November 2025. We do not underestimate the complexity of the transition process.

Members raised concerns about the requirement in the new clause 11A in the Rules for participants to provide 48 hours' notice of changes to services to avoid a fee, particularly where there are situations like emergency hospital admissions that are outside a participant's control. Members noted that there is no corresponding penalty or compensation for "no show" or delayed presentations by providers. We suggested to the Department that there is scope for this to be reviewed.

Members also raised a number of issues where clarity is required in relation to equipment and assistive technology, and the Department undertook to explore these.

Transport options are a further source of concern, especially in rural and remote areas. We are collating examples we have heard from the community and are keen to work with the Department to improve the system.

Support at Home and the Commonwealth Home Support Programme are key reform priorities for Council going forward and we welcome the opportunity to continue exploring these issues in depth so that we can provide you with informed, strategic advice.

Other Insights from Engagements

In addition to the issues raised about transition to the new Act and Support at Home, members continue to hear significant concerns about older people in hospital who are unable to access residential aged care and services (particularly concessional places) or respite services, for a range of structural and systemic reasons, including access decision-making by providers. Council intends to have a thorough discussion about this issue at a future meeting and provide you with further advice.

This Document Has Been Released Under
The Freedom Of Information Act 1982
By The Department Of Health, Disability And Ageing

Implementation of aged care reform

What you have delivered:



Completed 59 of 148 recommendations from Royal Commission into Aged Care



\$17 billion for wage increase aged care workers, 24/7 registered nursing in aged care homes

What you will deliver:

- ✓ Construction of residential aged care facility with 120 beds in Darwin
- ✓ Support at Home Program (implementation 1 July 2025)
- ✓ Core digital and ICT functionality - further enhancements delivered progressively thereafter
- ✓ \$10 million to deliver respite aged care beds in Canberra
- ✓ \$150,000 for backup power at Maurice Zeffert aged care facility in Perth

What will be the impact:



Effective aged care **regulatory model** ensuring quality and safety of care



Enhanced high quality **person-centered** aged care



A valued aged care workforce with the right **skills and knowledge**

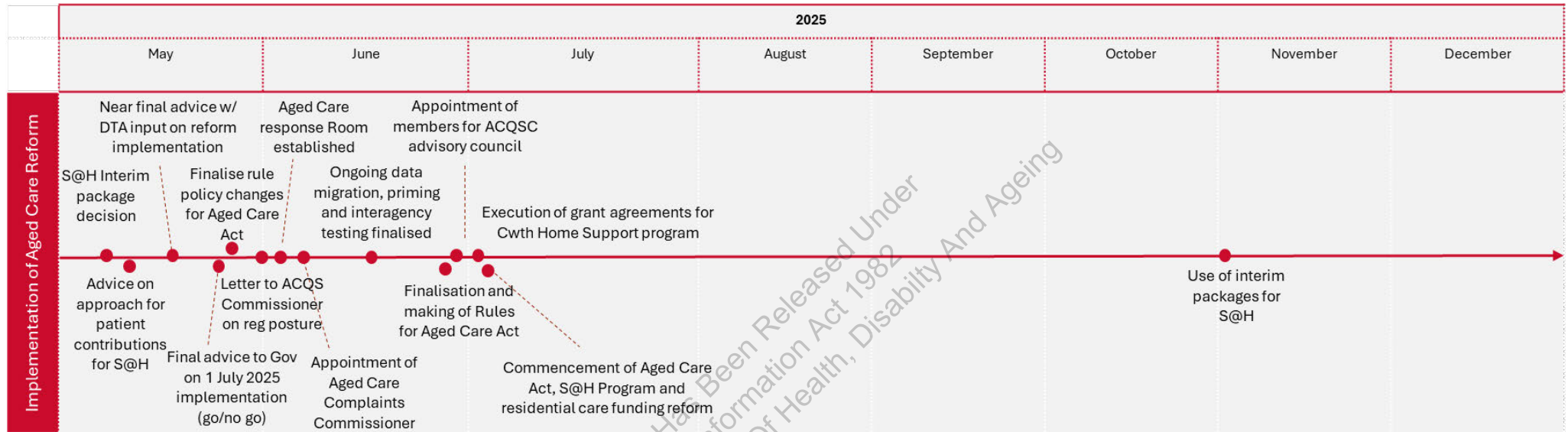
Critical next steps and decisions

- The department is preparing advice for your consideration in the week of 19 May 2025 on whether the 1 July 2025 start date for the *Aged Care Act 2024* (the Act), the Support at Home Program and related reforms is achievable. You will need to consider and provide advice (likely to Cabinet) in time for the final decision date of 28 May 2025. A deferred commencement date of the Act can be achieved through proclamation if needed.
- External readiness for the Act is being closely monitored. The aged care sector supports the reforms, but some providers are seeking a longer implementation and transition timeframe. While some providers will be ready, others have requested a significant delay beyond 1 July 2025.
- Internal readiness is also being closely monitored, including the ability of the department, Services Australia, and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission to be ready for the 1 July 2025 start date.
- The Aged Care Transition Taskforce has been established to guide transition.
- The work of the taskforce continued throughout the caretaker period and a progress update on its work will be provided to you.

- The underpinning ICT system required to support implementation is subject to independent assurance commissioned by the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA). The department has worked closely with DTA and has reached a level of mutual alignment on key issues. The latest assurance advice is that delivery confidence remains medium-low as significant risks in some areas remain. This is not unexpected in a program of reform of this size.
- We will brief you on additional aged care issues that require decision, following the decision on the start date of the Act.

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Timeline:



Critical Decisions

Title	Key Points	Critical date	Justification	Impact if decision is not made	Funding already provisioned?
Continuing to deliver on key commitments					
Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority's (IHACPA's) 2025-26 draft residential aged care pricing advice and thin markets review	Response required to IHACPA draft annual pricing advice.	12/05/25	Responses to IHACPA are due 12 May 2025.	IHACPA will provide their final pricing advice in July 2025 without consideration or feedback from you.	Yes
Support at Home program	In order to minimise implementation complexity, interim packages will commence after November 2025. Seeking your approval on the approach to the utilisation of interim packages during the first year of the Support at Home program and the ongoing management of the algorithm.	16/05/25	Support at Home commences on 1 July 2025 and providers are keen to understand the likely mix of full and minimum service offers over the first twelve months of the program.	Providers may lobby government about not having the information required to commence operation of the new program on 1 July 2025.	N/A
Progress updates on Commonwealth-only and Commonwealth / NGO recommendations for Disability Royal Commission biannual reporting	Approval of the departments response to the 5 health led recommendations in order for DSS to publish the first biannual progress report on the Disability Royal Commission.	16/05/25	The first biannual report requires Ministerial approval of a progress update for the five Health-led recommendations by 16 May in order to engage with HCEF on 23 May and HMM on 13 June.	Should the first report not be published on 30 June, key stakeholders may perceive a lack of commitment from the Australian Government to acting on recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission.	N/A
Adoption of the Pandemic Agreement at the World Health Assembly	WHO Member States have reached consensus on the text of the pandemic agreement, for adoption at the WHA (19-26 May).	19/05/25	Australia has played a critical role in Pandemic Agreement negotiations through the Inter-governmental Negotiating Body. Pending your agreement Australia would seek to adopt the Pandemic Agreement to commence the ratification process, and signal our strong support for cooperation on health security. Australia will not be bound to the terms of the treaty until it has been signed and entered into force, following domestic scrutiny by parliament, (after the WHA).	Australia would not be able to vote on the WHA adopting the Pandemic Agreement, and therefore will not be able to advocate for our interests.	N/A – funding not required until Australia has signed the agreement. This is expected to occur post-30 June.
Means testing approach for Support at Home for Q1 2025-26	Advice on approach to participant contributions for July-September for Support at Home based on feedback from Transition Taskforce.	20/05/25	Services Australia will start making means test assessments for Support at Home from 1 July. This means that some participants will finalise service agreements, and start to receive services, before they know the contribution rate they will be required to pay. A decision to change this approach would be needed early to allow time to develop draft rules and prepare provider and government ICT systems. This would flow through to timeliness of assessments of income and assets on commencement of Support at Home.	Delay in paying providers for the services they have provided and risk of bill shock for participants after the means assessment occur.	N/A
Commencement of the <i>Aged Care Act 2024</i> and Support at Home Program from 1 July 2025	A decision is required to proceed with a 1 July 2025 commencement date for the <i>Aged Care Act 2024</i> and the Support at Home Program, or to defer to a later date.	21/05/25	A decision is needed to provide older people and the sector with certainty that either 1 July 2025 remains the target date or a deferral is necessary. The proclamation to defer commencement would need to be taken to the 26 June 2025 Executive Council meeting at the latest. If a decision was made not to defer the Rules and the amendment bill become critical (see below).	s47C, s47E(d)	
Regulation amendments to update TGA fees and charges for 2025-26 financial year	Updates to TGA fees and charges needed to ensure recovery of costs of administering the regulatory scheme for therapeutic goods. For consideration of the update at the next Executive Council meeting scheduled 12/06/25, a decision will need to be made by 22/05/25.	22/05/25	TGA fees and charges are critical to ensuring the effective administration of the Therapeutic Goods Act, particularly post market monitoring of product safety, and consistency with the cost recovery guidelines.	Regulations must be updated in time to commence on 1/7/25 for sponsors and manufacturers to pay the 2025/26 annual charges. If this timeframe cannot be met, sponsors and manufacturers will pay the applicable 2024/25 annual charges, resulting in under recovery of the costs of regulation and impacting product safety.	N/A
Out-of-session decision on Food Standards Code	The Food Minister will need to sign a response form indicating preference for a review or not requesting a review in regards to of an application to allow food derived from insect-protected corn line MZIR260. This item is non-contentious and can be considered out of session.	22/05/25	This is a statutory deadline. As per section 84 of the FSANZ Act, Food Ministers must consider changes to the Food Standards Code within 60 days of notification. Food Ministers can either support these changes or request a review.	s47C	N/A