



Outcomes from Sector Support and Development Survey

Service provider insights

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Introduction

The Sector Support and Development (SSD) grant delivers targeted services to increase capacity of the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) providers and improve service delivery quality and access for older people.

On 1 August 2025, the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (the department) opened a consultation survey seeking feedback from in-home aged care providers and peak bodies on the future design of an SSD program. This report summarises feedback received through the survey. The report required extensive data validation, analysis, and quality assurance to ensure the findings were accurate and robust to publish.

Overview of the survey

The SSD consultation survey was open from 1 August 2025 to 11.59pm on Monday 1 September 2025. The purpose of the survey was to seek input from in-home aged care providers and aged care peak bodies, including organisations delivering services under the CHSP, to inform the future design of an SSD Program for in-home aged care.

Survey objectives

The objective of the survey was to seek sector feedback on what is working well in the existing SSD grant and areas to focus on moving forward.

A future refresh of an SSD program would aim to:

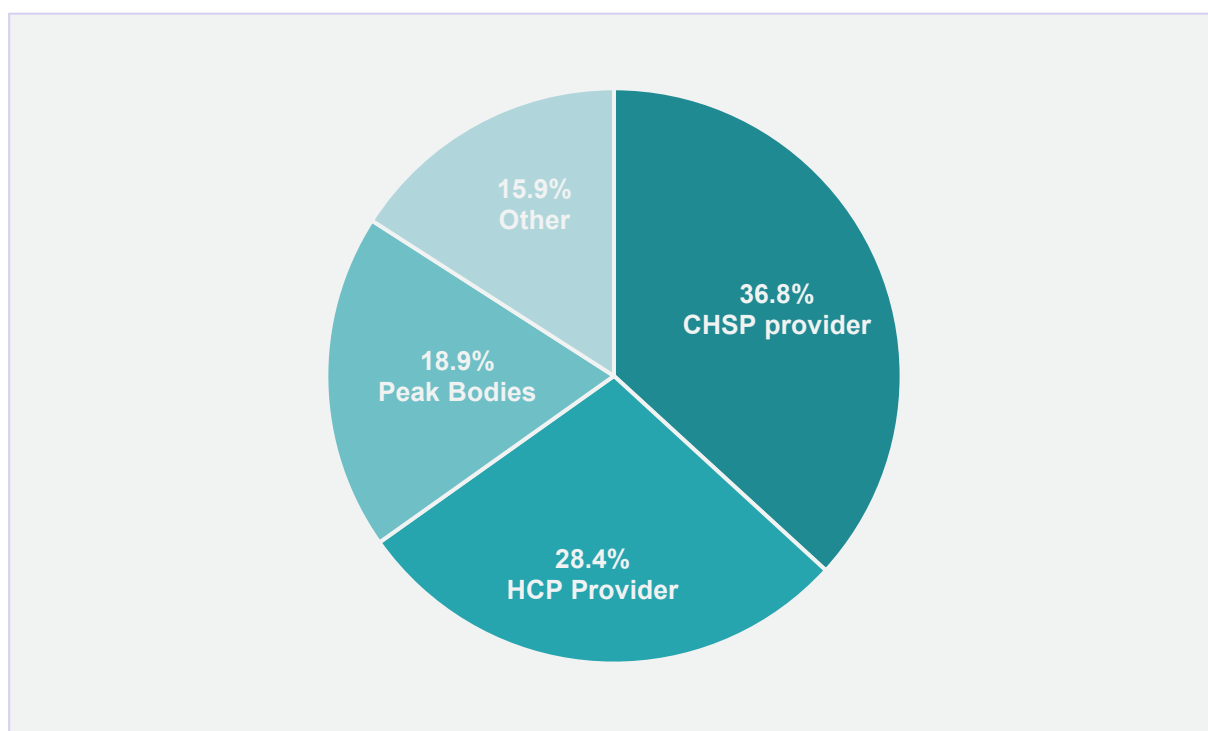
- support aged care providers, to meet their service delivery requirements under the *Aged Care Act 2024* (the Act)
- support sector capacity building
- better enable the carer workforce and volunteers
- have more structured funding for provider and consumer peak bodies and sponsorship arrangements.

Refreshing the approach to sector support reflects a strategic commitment to strengthening sector capability and ensuring alignment with legislative requirements under the Act. It is intended to enhance sector capacity, build workforce resilience – including carers and volunteers – and establish sustainable funding mechanisms for provider and consumer peak bodies. It also seeks to formalise sponsorship frameworks to promote collaboration and sustainability across the sector.

Data collection

All in-home aged care providers and peak bodies were invited to complete the survey as part of the department's consultation on the proposed changes to the program. A total of **201** valid survey responses were received and analysed, excluding blank, incomplete, test, and duplicate entries. These responses represent a broad cross-section of organisations within the aged care sector, including both metropolitan and regional or rural service providers. Respondents also included organisations delivering services to specific communities, such as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and LGBTIQ+ communities, reflecting the sector's diversity and inclusivity.

Graph 1 – Survey respondents



The majority of respondents were CHSP providers (36.8%), followed by Home Care Package (HCP) providers (28.4%), peak bodies (18.9%) and then 'Other' organisation types (15.9%) which included local government entities and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) providers. Some organisations receive more than one funding source.

The survey sought stakeholder feedback on 4 topics:

- supporting sector capacity building
- better enabling the carer workforce and volunteers
- structured funding for peak bodies
- sponsorship arrangements.

Survey findings do not represent the views of the whole sector, only of those who participated in the survey.

Respondents did not have to answer every question. Some questions were dependent on previous answers, and participants could choose to skip questions. If a respondent submitted a survey with at least 50 per cent of questions answered, their response was included for analysis.

Not all respondents answered every question. As such, the data for each question in this report show the percentages of respondents who responded to that question.

Providing supplementary documentation alongside the survey submission was voluntary.

Key findings

Service provider coverage

The survey revealed respondent willingness and capacity to deliver SSD services after 1 July 2026.

Overall, **80.1%** of respondents reported receipt of Australian Government funding. The CHSP was the most frequently cited source, followed by programs such as the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS), SSD Program, Care Finders, and Home Care Packages Program¹. Additional funding streams were identified for respite care, transport, social support, volunteer initiatives, and specialised projects including dementia support and palliative care. Many organisations reported accessing multiple funding sources, highlighting the sector's mix of program delivery.

Sector reforms and capacity building

A key theme emerging from the survey results was the challenge of navigating ongoing sector reforms. Many organisations expressed concern about the pace and

¹ The Support at Home program replaced the Home Care Packages (HCP) Program and Short Term-Restorative Care Programme on 1 November 2025.

complexity of regulatory changes, noting that staff and volunteers often feel overwhelmed. Respondents emphasised the need for clearer guidance, more timely and consistent communication from government, and practical resources to support compliance.

While reforms were generally acknowledged as necessary, several organisations reported that these changes have increased administrative burden and uncertainty, particularly for smaller providers and those operating in regional and remote areas.

Additionally, these findings indicate that there is a strong demand for targeted training, mentoring, and peer networking opportunities. Respondents highlighted the importance of capacity-building activities that are practical, regionally relevant, and responsive to the diverse needs of communities. Calls were made for more accessible and affordable professional development, alongside support for digital transformation and upgrades to IT systems.

Respondents identified priority areas for capacity-building activities to support the in-home aged care sector in 2026–27.

Graph 2 – Priority areas for capacity building activities



The most frequently cited priorities were supporting compliance with the Aged Care Quality Standards and the *Aged Care Act 2024* (**66.9%**) and training and upskilling staff and volunteers (**55.8%**). The ongoing need for mentoring partnerships and networking (**47.4%**) and supporting collaboration (**46.8%**) were also key focus areas.

Workforce and volunteer challenges

Workforce sustainability emerged as a key concern. Respondents reported persistent challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff, citing factors such as competition with other industries, wage constraints, and limited career progression opportunities.

Volunteer engagement was also highlighted as a recurring issue, with organisations noting declining volunteer numbers, increased costs and administrative requirements – including mandatory checks – and a lack of incentives to attract and retain volunteers. While some organisations have implemented innovative local solutions, such as establishing volunteer resource centres, respondents emphasised the need for ongoing funding and coordinated, sector-wide strategies to address these workforce pressures.

Graph 3 – Key challenges for recruitment and retention



The most commonly reported challenge was staff overwhelm with sector reform and associated change management activities (**71.4%**). This survey was released prior to significant changes to the aged care system which came into effect on 1 November 2025 with the introduction of the new Act.

Staffing pressures were a challenge for roughly half of respondents, with **47.4%** concerned about shortages of qualified and/or experienced staff, and **44.2%** noting difficulty attracting and/or retaining staff.

Similar issues were reported for the volunteer workforce with issues around attracting and retaining volunteers (**38.3%**), as well as the costs associated with training (**41.6%**) and obtaining working with vulnerable people checks (**20.1%**).

Other issues raised included the absence of clear guidelines on the use of paid staff and volunteers, insufficient cultural awareness training, and challenges engaging with recruitment or volunteer agencies.

Peak body funding

Peak bodies represented a significant voice in the survey, accounting for **18.9%** of responses. Feedback from these respondents highlighted concerns that current funding arrangements do not adequately reflect the diversity, scale, or evolving needs of the aged care sector. Respondents noted that existing models often lack flexibility and fail to address the unique challenges faced by smaller providers, regional respondents, and those supporting culturally and linguistically diverse communities. To address these issues, several peak bodies called for more representative and sustainable funding frameworks that ensure equitable access to capacity-building initiatives and advocacy resources.

Sponsorship arrangements

Respondents recognised sponsorship arrangements as a valuable mechanism for enhancing sector capability, fostering innovation, and encouraging greater participation in collaborative learning and knowledge sharing. Overall, **86.6%** of respondents either host or attend sector conferences or events supporting older people or the aged care sector. Interest in future engagement is strong, with **70.6%** indicating a desire to host or attend new sector conferences or events. Nearly half of respondents (**47.3%**) stated that sponsorship funding would be beneficial in organising or promoting new events.

Respondents submitted details for proposed events, which included conferences, expos, training workshops, and community forums. These events commonly focused on themes such as aged care reforms, workforce development, volunteer engagement, cultural inclusion, and consumer education.

Additionally, collaboration was widely supported, with **64.2%** expressing a willingness to work with other providers to participate in or co-host events. Respondents consistently identified professional development, networking, exposure to innovative ideas, and the ability to keep informed about policy and practice changes as key benefits of event attendance. Many noted that participation would directly enhance their capacity to deliver quality services and respond effectively to sector reforms.

Community of Practice (CoP)

Overall, **60.7%** reported that the existing CoP is a valuable tool for communication with the department, knowledge sharing, and sector updates. Further, **68.9 %** of respondents indicated that a CoP platform would be beneficial under a new SSD Program.

Respondents highlighted the role of the CoP was beneficial in facilitating peer support, disseminating best practice, and providing timely information, particularly during periods of sector reform.

Table 1 – Community of Practice

What works well	Opportunities for improvement
• improved access to resources • opportunities for networking (especially for smaller or regional providers) • professional development through webinars and forums.	• more interactive sessions • greater inclusion of diverse provider voices.

A minority of respondents noted barriers to engagement, such as lack of awareness or time constraints, but overall, the data demonstrates strong sector support for the CoP as a mechanism for collaboration, learning, and sector resilience.

Supplementary documentation

Respondents were invited to upload supplementary documentation alongside their survey submissions. A total of **43** documents were received, representing national and state peak bodies, local governments and councils, regional alliances, specialist providers (including those focused on multicultural communities, LGBTIQ+ populations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, transport, meals, and home modifications), as well as sector consultancies and collaborative networks.

Contributions were made by both large, well-established organisations and smaller, rural or remote providers, ensuring comprehensive representation from every state and territory.

Key themes:

- The majority of submissions stated alignment with the objectives of the SSD Program. These objectives include supporting providers to meet the requirements of the new Act, building sector capacity, enabling workforce and volunteer development, and providing structured funding for peak bodies and sponsorship initiatives.
- Training, upskilling, and peer learning were consistently identified as the most valued SSD activities. Communities of Practice, regional forums, and tailored workshops were widely cited as effective mechanisms for building sector capability and sharing knowledge.
- Respondents supported the idea of nationally consistent standards, frameworks, and funding to ensure equity and quality across all regions and provider types. However, most also advocate for a hybrid model that combines this national backbone with strong regional or place-based delivery, allowing for local flexibility and responsiveness while maintaining consistency and fairness nationwide.
- Workforce recruitment, retention, and volunteer engagement were major challenges identified across the sector. Innovative models—such as national volunteer frameworks, time banking, and partnerships with training organisations—were proposed to address these issues.
- Alliances and partnerships were noted as highly effective for sharing resources, reducing duplication, and amplifying impact. Submissions highlighted the value of joint planning, shared governance, and cross-jurisdictional collaboration.

Next steps

The department thanks all organisations who participated in the survey. Your feedback will be taken into consideration by the department during the design of a future SSD program.