



Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner Advisory Working Group

Meeting 1, 14 September 2026

Setting up the future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Commissioner Office

People from the First Nations aged care sector, community-controlled organisations, government, and data and evidence fields met for the first meeting of the working group. The group will help guide the set-up of the future permanent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Commissioner Office.

The meeting brought together people with experience in aged care, health, community services, governance, research and community advocacy. Members said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and older people must stay at the centre of this work.

Shared commitment

Members talked about why it is important to create a permanent office that supports the needs and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and older people. They said the office should be shaped by cultural safety, community voice, lived experience, strong governance and good evidence.

Members also recognised the work of Elders and communities who have helped shape the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Commissioner legislation now before the Australian Parliament.

Laying the foundations

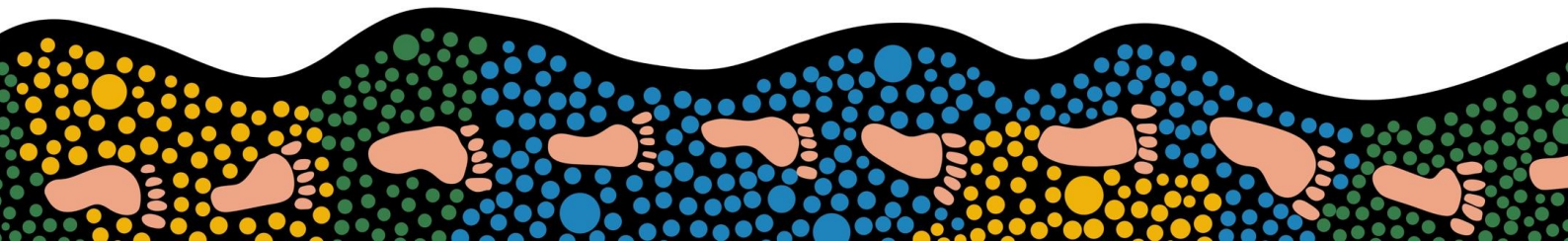
The working group looked at key documents and ideas that will guide its work over the next few months. The discussion focused on:

- How the group will work together and give advice while the office is being set up.
- The roadmap to help the permanent office begin its work.
- How to measure success in ways that go beyond basic set-up tasks and include community voice, cultural safety and trusted relationships.
- The principles that will guide the future appointment process.
- Ways to make sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can take part in a meaningful way.

Members said the process must be open and accountable. They agreed that community views should have a real influence on key decisions.

Strengthening community voice

A key part of the discussion was how to make sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and older people have strong and direct input as the office is set up.





Members supported including people with lived experience in the working group. They also discussed how to identify respected Elders who can share their knowledge, cultural authority and experience. Members said Elders should receive the right support and payment for taking part.

Working together

The working group agreed to keep talking openly, respect different views and make sure advice is recorded and considered. Members supported seeking advice between formal meetings when needed. They also agreed that complex or culturally sensitive matters should still be discussed as a group.

Participants also looked at ways to meet face to face where possible, noting that this can help build relationships and support better discussion.

Looking ahead

The working group will keep working over the next few months to help set up the permanent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Commissioner Office. Future talks will focus on appointments, how the office will operate, governance, community participation and readiness to begin.

Members ended the meeting by confirming their shared commitment to better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and older people. They agreed that Elders' and older people's voices must stay central to the future of aged care reform.

Working Group membership

The Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner Advisory Working Group members are:

- Jodi Cassar PSM, Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner — Co-chair
- Kim Whiteley, Chief Executive Officer, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council — Co-chair
- Dawn Casey, Chief Executive Officer, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- James Atkinson, Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Community Elders Services
- Natasha McCormack, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Purple House (Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation)
- Donna Murray, Chief Executive Officer, Indigenous Allied Health Australia
- Leonie Williamson, Acting Chief Executive Officer, The Healing Foundation
- Louise York, Community Services Group Head, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

The Working Group will invite two more members who bring community knowledge and direct experience of aged care. This will help make sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and older people have a strong voice in the group's work.

