



Aged care – Reforms to support people from diverse backgrounds

In response to the Aged Care Royal Commission, the Australian Government will invest \$585.7 million in making safe, quality aged care accessible for people with a wide range of personal experiences and circumstances and from diverse backgrounds, through its once in a generation aged care reforms.

The Government will work to realise the Royal Commission’s finding that ‘diversity should be core business in aged care¹’ including ensuring their voices are heard with representation on advisory bodies and that diversity is actively considered in program design and regulatory decisions.

Specific measures include:

- \$93.7 million in additional funding to introduce a network of up to 500 local Community Care Finders to improve engagement with vulnerable senior Australians (such as people who are homeless), building on existing navigation supports to provide intensive face-to-face assistance to access aged care services and connect with other relevant health and social supports.
- \$65.2 million to increase translating and interpreting services to address gaps and the under utilisation of these services for diverse older Australians, including interpreting services in assessment planning and review; for Care Finders; and for translating key documents into community languages. This will assist more than 75,000 older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- \$9.6 million to certify providers where specific services are offered that meet diverse needs, for example cultural and linguistic services. This will help consumers select providers that meet their specific needs.
- \$6.2 million to provide assistance to aged care providers to understand the diversity of the community they are serving and assess whether actual usage of their service reflects any barriers to access which must be rectified.
- A new Aged Care Act to underpin the fundamental and generational reform across aged care. The new Act will place older people, in all their diversity, at the centre of the reformed aged care system.
- \$396.9 million over five years for capital investment through the *More equitable access to Aged Care for First Nations and Special Needs Groups* measure to enable aged care providers to make needed improvements to their buildings and build new services in areas where senior Australians currently do not have access, or where staff caring for their needs do not have suitable housing. First

¹ Royal Commission Final Report Volume 1 Summary and recommendations, page 98.

Nations peoples, homelessness providers and rural and remote areas will be initial priority areas to benefit from this measure from 2022-23.

- The expansion of the Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) from residential care into home and community care. This initial \$14 million from 1 July 2022 will provide greater protections to consumers receiving home and community aged care services, including older people who are more vulnerable such as those who are socially disadvantaged.
- A National Aged Care Data Strategy to identify, improve and better use aged care data to inform current and future service demand, workforce, health interface interaction, quality and safety and outcomes of care, including for people with diverse needs through better data collection and use of diversity identifiers.
- Other measures to support First Nations people will improve consumer experience by assisting older First Nations people to be better informed and understand all the services available through the aged care system. The measures will increase capability and viability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and increase a skilled and culturally safe workforce.

An additional measure will indirectly support vulnerable people and assist providers to address diversity as core business in the aged care system:

- \$3.9 billion to increase the care time for residents to an average of 200 minutes per day, including 40 minutes of registered nurse (RN) time; and fund the provision of a registered nurse on site for a minimum of 16 hours per day. This will particularly benefit older people with diverse backgrounds and life experiences who may require more care or will benefit from more time to build trust and rapport with their carers.

These measures respond to *Recommendations 1–3, 7, 9, 12, 15, 17, 22–24, 27, 29–30, 45–48, 50, 52–55, 67, 75, 80, 86, 94, 100, 106, 108, 114 and 122* of the Royal Commission’s final report.

For further information, refer to the relevant fact sheets.

Why is this important?

The Royal Commission found that *‘the aged care system often struggles to provide appropriate care to people with diverse needs’ [and yet it] ‘should be equally welcoming and supportive of everyone needing care.’* It also found *‘there can be a lack of understanding and respect for people’s culture, background and life experiences.’*²

These measures will help embed a focus on diversity in the aged care system, deliver quality aged care services to people from diverse groups and provide more equitable access to services for vulnerable populations, providing greater support for senior Australians to access and navigate the aged care system with a level of support commensurate to their needs.

² Final Report page 71.

Who will benefit?

Many older Australians have diverse characteristics and backgrounds and will benefit from these measures. These include many older people in the following groups, noting that a person can have attributes and experiences in multiple groups:

- over 100,000 older people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia
- over 36 per cent of older Australians were born outside of Australia and one in three older people were born in a non-English speaking country
- more than one in 10 people have diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex characteristics
- almost 15,000 older Australians experience homelessness or are at risk of homelessness
- one in 10 Australians aged over 65 lives with cognitive impairment and dementia
- more than 80 per cent of older Australians report an affiliation to a religion
- over half of older Australians experience some sort of disability
- more than one in 10 older Australians live in regional, rural and remote communities
- one in 12 older Australians experience significant financial or social disadvantage
- one in 12 older Australians have four or more chronic diseases
- there are over 150,000 older Australian veterans
- there are half a million care leavers in Australia who are now between 40 and 90 years of age, with the numbers of parents separated from their children by forced adoption or removal still unknown.