



Governance (Pillar 5 of the Royal Commission response) – More equitable access to aged care for First Nations people and special needs groups

In response to the Aged Care Royal Commission, the Australian Government is investing \$630.2 million to make the aged care system more accessible for senior Australians with special needs. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and those living in regional, rural, and remote Australia.

New supports include:

- \$397 million over 5 years for capital investment 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. This significantly improve the quality of care for senior Australians and increase aged care services availability.
 - Communities will benefit significantly from construction projects and increased aged care services. Projects will provide around 1,400 construction jobs and benefit the 471,000 senior Australians living in rural and remote locations.
 - Opportunities will be provided for care workers to collaborate across health, aged care and disability care.
 - Providers that currently offer culturally appropriate care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be encouraged to expand into aged care service delivery.
 - Evaluations of this measure will identify service gaps within regional, rural and remote Australia to assist with addressing areas of greatest demand, giving particular focus to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and consumers with special needs.
- \$126 million over 4 years in additional funding to support aged care services where delivery costs are higher and viability is challenging due to their remoteness.
 - This funding boost will support National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care services and Multi-Purpose Services to deliver better quality care in more locations, allowing more people to receive care closer to family and friends.

- \$106 million over 4 years for an Indigenous workforce of 250 people to provide trusted face to face support and assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to better navigate and access care. This workforce will also sit alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people while Regional Assessment Service and Aged Care Assessment Teams assess their care needs upon entry and while in care.

Why is this important?

Senior Australians with special needs do not have equitable access to aged care. For example, only 12% of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people currently receive aged care as opposed to approximately 30% of eligible non-Indigenous people. These cohorts are growing.

From 2017 to 2027, the fastest projected growth of frail older people will be in regional, rural and remote areas.

Between 2006–2016 homelessness increased by 50% for people aged 55 and over.

This funding will contribute to attracting and retaining a skilled aged care workforce particularly in remote and very remote Australia where facilities are experiencing skill shortages of up to 81%.

These investments will not only ensure culturally appropriate aged care services are available and accessible, but they will help create economic stimulus in regional, rural and remote communities, growing local jobs.

In areas where there is limited service availability, or low numbers of clients, the collaboration between aged care, health and disability care is particularly important as it can achieve economies of scale in rural areas with small populations, leading to better health outcomes.

These initiatives respond either fully or in part to *Recommendations 45–48, 50, 52–55 and 75* of the Royal Commission's final report.

Who will benefit?

Senior Australians, in particular the more than 471,000 living in rural and remote areas, the almost 166,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people nationally, seniors living with disabilities, and those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness will benefit.

Aged care providers and their staff, particularly the 670 regional and remote aged care services and those delivering care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, will directly benefit from the funding assistance to deliver increased services, undertake capital works to improve quality and live in appropriate staff accommodation.

Approximately 1,400 local construction workers and 250 communities will experience flow on benefits through the creation of local jobs in construction and increased future service delivery.

There will be benefits to state and territory governments through access to capital grant funding to enhance and provide services in thin markets.

How much will this cost?

The Australian Government is committing \$630.2 million over 5 years, from 2021–22.