

The Council of Elders

Senior Australian's voice for aged care reform and ageing generally

Communiqué – 25 January 2022

The inaugural meeting of the Aged Care Council of Elders took place on 25 January 2022.

The Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Greg Hunt MP and the Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care Services, Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck, addressed the members, thanking them for their willingness to be members of the Council of Elders.

Minister Hunt said that the Council of Elders was designed to be the voice of senior Australians, bringing to him and others their frank and fearless advice. Minister Colbeck also acknowledged that, as demonstrated in the Royal Commission, many senior Australians feel they have lost their voice in aged care and this Council represents an opportunity to get their voice back.

In response to the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, the Australian Government outlined an aged care reform plan based on five pillars. The Ministers highlighted that they wanted to hear the voices of senior Australians throughout the implementation of this plan. The Council of Elders has a wide remit to engage with and gather the voices of others. They can then express clearly what seniors of all backgrounds want to Minister Hunt, Minister Colbeck and the National Aged Care Advisory Council.

Each of the members was provided the opportunity to share their lived experiences, knowledge, and passions. There was strong sentiment from members that there needs to be an emphasis on ageing well. Priority issues highlighted by members included:

- supporting senior Australians to age well
- support for the aged care workforce, especially in the COVID environment
- the importance of an individual focus in aged care with choice and control being essential
- tackling elder abuse, in aged care and the broader community
- equitable, high quality aged care being available, irrespective of location or social, economic or cultural background
- improving home care and respite care in a timely way for all who need it
- achieving adequate housing for all and tackling homelessness
- considering the social and cultural determinants of ageing and aged care
- promoting functional capability at all stages of life
- supporting living well with disability over the age of 65 years
- supporting senior Australians from the diverse CALD and LGBTQI populations
- ensure all senior Australians receive holistic end-of-life care and that grieving families are supported throughout the dying process
- early and accurate diagnosis of dementia, and
- supporting the dignity of risk for all older people.

The Council of Elders will meet monthly for at least the next six months, and, where possible, prior to each meeting of the National Aged Care Advisory Council, of which the Chair, Mr Ian Yates AM, is a member, representing this Council.

Members expressed the honour they felt to be involved in such a significant role in the reform of the aged care system. The Chair said that this body represents a radical shift in giving senior people direct input into government decision-making by providing advice directly to the Ministers and Government, as well as to the National Aged Care Advisory Council.

The Council agreed to ensure that their consultations are broad and inclusive, ensuring that the voices of those for whom English is not their first language, indigenous senior Australians, senior people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and those living in rural and remote areas are heard and do drive change in the delivery of aged care services and improvements in the well-being of all senior Australians.

The Council of Elders voice will be heard and will impact change in the delivery of aged care services.