

National Aged Care Advisory Council – Communiqué

Second meeting, 20 January 2022

Members acknowledged the need to balance the reforms in the context of the extremely challenging situation the Omicron outbreak has created for the entire aged care sector, in particular the workforce pressures experienced. Members acknowledged the significant work undertaken in keeping people safe. The safety and wellbeing of all senior Australians and all those who care and support them is under significant stress.

The Advisory Council and the Department of Health will work together to support aged care providers and senior Australians through these challenges. Members discussed the need to carefully manage engagement with senior Australians and the sector to allow for meaningful consultation and will work with the Department to review the sequencing of the reforms given the current context.

Members discussed the Terms of Reference and agreed they will be finalised and endorsed out of session. The reform schedule will guide the Advisory Council's work and the Advisory Council will also prioritise emerging issues as they arise.

Members support the passage of the *Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Response No. 2) Bill 2021*, emphasised that it is imperative the Bill is passed by Parliament in the February 2022 sitting, and agreed to discuss the urgency of the legislation with all the groups they are associate with. Delays could impact the development and implementation of the new Aged Care Act by 1 July 2023 and have negative implications for the reforms. The Bill will provide senior Australians with essential protections, make it easier for providers to comply and meet regulatory obligations, and will facilitate independent pricing work.

Members discussed the proposed key features of the new Support at Home Program ahead of broader stakeholder consultations, and considered potential issues and impacts across the home care sector and for consumers. Members highlighted the program contains many positive advances to build a more comprehensive home care program to improve supports for senior Australians wanting to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. The Advisory Council will continue to be involved as work progresses.

A new approach to regulating aged care is required to better align regulation to the proportion of risk for providers. A new regulatory framework will be developed in concert with the new Aged Care Act and the new Support at Home Program. Members discussed the concept paper for a new framework for regulating aged care and agreed it is a genuine attempt to change the way the system is regulated. Members raised the model needs to encourage innovation and a culture of continuous improvement. Principles and values based regulatory requirements will create healthy competitive tension in the sector and the workforce having an employer of choice. Consultation will commence in early 2022 to inform the detailed design of the new aged care regulatory framework.

The next meeting is scheduled for 24 February 2022.