

National Aged Care Advisory Council – Communiqué

Meeting 3 - 24 February 2022

A year has passed since the release of the Royal Commission Final Report. There is still significant work to be done, but those involved across the sector appreciate the progress that has been made so far, despite the challenges that COVID-19 has presented. To fulfil its vital role in supporting reform success, the National Aged Care Advisory Council (the Advisory Council) continues to discuss the current contextual challenges faced by the aged care sector while focusing on the future design of the system. The care and wellbeing of senior Australians remain front and centre of all considerations.

A range of priority issues regarding the sector and the reform agenda were raised by members for discussion. Members want to further assist the Department of Health (the Department) in the implementation of the Australian National Aged Care Classification (AN-ACC) funding model and will set up a subgroup to provide additional support, including considering the approach to integrated Care Planning (particularly allied health and other professionals supporting the wellbeing, reablement and restorative care of residents).

Members expressed concern that the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Response No. 2) Bill 2021 did not pass the Senate in February 2022 and noted the opportunity in late March 2022 where the Bill could be passed. The Council advised the Department to develop clear contingency plans, should the Bill not pass the Senate.

The Department presented an update on planning for reform activities progressed through collaboration with a subgroup of the Advisory Council. Members noted the significant scale of reform and agreed senior Australians and their families have an appetite to see change quickly, but this needs to be balanced with the capacity of the sector to implement the changes. It is vital to ensure detailed change management planning and timely sharing of information with providers to ensure they can build the requisite changes into their business plans to achieve the necessary reform. It was also suggested that the reform planning reflect the increased urgency of some reform priorities over others, such as workforce – while working to maintain a balance between the urgency of reforms and the practicalities of implementation, ensuring the consumer is at the centre of all reforms.

Members were provided with an overview of the work to develop the new Aged Care Act (the new Act) and the timetable of activity through to July 2023 when the new Act is scheduled to take effect. Members noted the risks to the timing of key stages and the importance of getting the new Act right. Members were grateful of the opportunity to consider the new Act which will redesign the Aged Care system which will focus on the needs of the consumer. The Advisory Council is keen to remain engaged with this cornerstone piece of work.

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner, Janet Anderson, delivered a presentation on the work of the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and its Quality and Safety Advisory Council. Members noted the key achievement and challenges of the Regulator, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on quality and safety in aged care, and the implications of the reforms on the role of the Regulator.

Members will advance the model for the Advisory Working Groups for agreement at the March 2022 meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for 17 March 2022.