

National Aged Care Advisory Council – Communiqué

Meeting 4 – 17 March 2022

The Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care Services, Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck, attended the meeting and thanked Members for their ongoing contribution towards the Government's aged care reform agenda. Minister Colbeck spoke of his strong support for digitising segments of aged care and is confident there are efficiencies for the sector. He stated this is a very important part of reform, noting that around 40% of the sector are still providing quality indicator data manually. Building efficiency is fundamental as it will return time back to the sector for provision of care.

The Minister and members had an open discussion on the imperative to progress reform within the already agreed timeline, to drive anticipated improvements for consumers, while balancing this with the many competing pressures on the aged care sector. He also highlighted the importance of maintaining momentum. The merits of piloting initiatives such as Monthly Care statements in order to shape appropriate solutions for consumers was discussed.

The Department provided an update on the future aged care digital vision, including the digital initiatives agreed at MYEFO 2021, to support more streamlined interactions between providers and Government. This includes an initial pilot of Business to Government (B2G) connectivity to establish a direct connection between the aged care digital platform and service providers. Members were enthusiastic about the approach noting the importance of assisting the sector to digitise data to better support consumers, help providers keep pace with reform, and minimise unnecessary regulatory burden wherever possible.

Emma Hossack gave an insightful presentation on information technology considerations and lessons learned from international health systems. Aspects covered included the importance of interoperability of systems, benefits of co-design and piloting of new systems, and the value and importance of data. Members recognised the important role technology will have as one of the fundamental enablers of the reform program and were encouraged to see the alignment with the Business to Government Measure. Members agreed the approach to co-design and piloting of scalable implementations linking aged care providers and consumers should be brought back to the Advisory Council for consideration.

The Department provided an update on key elements of the new Aged Care Act (the new Act) currently under consideration and sought members early feedback on the proposed objects for the new Act. Members discussed how the legislation will enhance the rights of older Australians and noted the importance of equity principles. Members reinforced the need to put consumers at the centre of all reforms and recognised the critical role of the new Act to enable this.

Members agreed the model for progressing work with the Advisory Working Groups and discussed priority topics for further consideration. Members reinforced their previous comments about the significant scale of reform and the capacity of the sector to implement the changes, emphasising the importance of early communication to inform decision making.

Members wished to acknowledge and thank aged care providers for their extraordinary efforts through extensive planning and preparedness activities they undertook to ensure resident and staff health and wellbeing were prioritised during the recent NSW and Queensland floods.

The next meeting of the Advisory Council is scheduled for Thursday, 28 April 2022.