

The Council of Elders

A voice for older Australians in the aged care reforms and ageing generally

Communiqué – 9 June 2022

The June meeting of the Council of Elders provided an opportunity for members to review progress on the aged care reforms and hear updates following the change of government at the Federal Election on 21 May 2022.

The Chair, Mr Ian Yates, noted that briefings with the new Ministers had commenced and the Council recognised and welcomed that the new government will continue to regard aged care as its highest priority.

The Council discussed the establishment of portfolio working groups to allow members deeper consideration of specific reform priorities, noting the Council will continue to have an interest across the full suite of reforms. The areas agreed for portfolio working groups were:

1. Support at Home
2. The new Aged Care Act
3. Provider transparency
4. Star ratings, and
5. Aged care workforce.

The Department provided an overview on the establishment of an interim Inspector-General of Aged Care, in response to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. The interim Inspector-General will provide independent oversight of the administration and regulation of the aged care system, including implementation of the reforms recommended by the Royal Commission. Members expressed support for the establishment of an interim Inspector-General and noted that it is a critical function to protect vulnerable older Australians.

Members discussed the aged care workforce. The Council noted a recent story on the ABC's 7.30 program that featured an item about harnessing the mature workforce through training older job seekers to be care and support workers. Members noted that many people currently delivering meals and providing transport services for older people are older volunteers.

The Department provided the Council with a briefing on the proposed Support at Home Program. A revised draft model was presented, which will better align services to need, and increase flexibility for clients. The Council provided feedback on a range of areas including:

- how the new model would impact people in rural and remote areas where there may be fewer services available
- whether there would be any assessments carried out by interpreters, for older people who do not speak English
- how the new program would work better for people who prefer services from more than one service provider
- how fees are levied on those who access in-home care as well as respite services
- the crossover between NDIS and home care supports.

The Department advised that this level of detail is being considered and is looking at how these systems work together. The Department intends to provide an update on in-home care reforms through a webinar to be held in the coming months.

The Department gave an update on improvements to the [Aged Care Engagement Hub](#) website, to make it more accessible, user-friendly, and informative. The changes include adding more detail about engagement activities and how they fit into the broader reforms.

Members noted that improving accessibility of information and engagement activities is important, and that consultation surveys should be made available in hardcopy, to improve accessibility for older people who may not regularly access the internet.

The Council will next meet face to face on 21 and 22 July 2022 in Canberra.

More information on the [Council of Elders](#) can be found on the website.