

# The Council of Elders

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

## Communique – 16 September 2022

At its September 2022 meeting, the Council of Elders provided advice on four priority areas of the aged care reforms: the Aged Care Digital Strategy, the Aged Care Approvals Round, Care Minutes, and the communication and engagement approach of the proposed Inspector-General of Aged Care.

The Council considered a draft of the new Aged Care Digital Strategy and provided advice on how the strategy could best meet the needs of older Australians. The Council commended the development of an Aged Care Digital Strategy noting the objective of the strategy is to ensure that the needs of older Australians are well supported by digital tools, and that they are provided with consistent and equitable access to information and services they need.

Key messages from the Council focused on accessibility and digital literacy with a specific emphasis on ensuring that the document is meaningful to the intended audiences, the importance of innovation and how assistive and mainstream technology could be used creatively to promote positive outcomes in aged care, for example, where older Australians have used technology to avoid hospitalisation.

The Council provided advice on the implementation of a new residential aged care system that allocates residential care places to older Australians, to commence on 1 July 2024. This allocation of places replaces the Aged Care Approvals Round. The Council's discussion centred around transitional arrangements to the new system, the allocation of residential care places, the assessment of older Australians seeking to access residential aged care, as well as the measures that should be put in place to assist older Australians in choosing a provider.

The Council also discussed the initial Care Minutes target of an average 200 minutes per resident per day, including a minimum of an average 40 minutes of registered nurse time, set by the Australian Government, with a specific focus on addressing key issues and misconceptions. Key messages from the Council centred on funding sufficiency to ensure continuity of allied health and lifestyle therapy, the importance of the quality assurance process to ensure only legitimate care time was included towards targets, and the importance of addressing the emotional and mental well-being of older Australians as well as the provision of clinical care.

The Council provided feedback on the communication and engagement approach for the proposed Inspector-General of Aged Care. The Council noted the importance of appropriate communication and engagement channels, and mechanisms that support inclusivity to reach a broader audience.

The Council also considered an update by the Department of Health and Aged Care regarding its broader communication and engagement approach to support the Council to engage with older Australians. The Council acknowledged the recent improvements to the Aged Care Engagement Hub noting it was much more user friendly and that the department had taken on the Council's feedback.

The Council acknowledged the importance of older Australians, as well as their friends and families, being involved with the consultations relating to aged care reform. In addition, the Council noted the timeframes associated with significant reforms of this nature and the success to date with implementing positive change across the aged care sector. The Council also acknowledged the cooperation between the Department of Health and Aged Care and the Council, working closely together to progress reforms.

The next meeting of the Council will be held in Canberra on 11 October 2022.