



Royal
Commission
into Aged
Care Quality
and Safety

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety: **Final Report**

SECTOR SUPPORT *summary*

“The extent of substandard care in Australia’s aged care system reflects both poor quality on the part of aged care providers and fundamental systematic flaws with the way the Australian aged care system is designed and governed. People receiving aged care deserve better...we both strongly conclude that fundamental change is needed.”

Royal Commissioners Tony Pagone QC & Lynelle Briggs AO

After nearly two and a half years of hearings, The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety handed their recommendations to the Federal Government on 26 February 2021. Over the course of the Royal Commission, clear common themes have been identified including dignity and respect, control and choice, the importance of relationships and connections

to communities, the desire for a good quality of life and ageing at home. In this article, we will outline the contents of the final report, the Government’s response and how providers can proactively prepare for change in the aged care sector in the coming years.

We’ve summarised over 2000 pages into 7 pages below.

What's in the report?

The 2000 page Final Report is titled '**Care, Dignity and Respect**', and includes a total of 5 volumes:

Volume 1 is a summary of the full report and the Commission's 148 recommendations to government.

Volume 2 outlines the current system including types of care, how it is accessed, who pays for it, how it is regulated and how it is staffed.

Volume 3 outlines a new system and topics are divided into Part A and Part B.

Part A includes a discussion of:

- ▶ A proposed new Act
- ▶ Changes to governance
- ▶ Quality and safety
- ▶ New program design
- ▶ Carers and volunteers
- ▶ Accommodation
- ▶ Aged care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- ▶ Rural and remote services
- ▶ Health care access
- ▶ Young people in aged care
- ▶ Older people with disability
- ▶ The aged care workforce

Part B includes a discussion of topics such as:

- ▶ Provider governance
- ▶ Quality regulation and advocacy
- ▶ Research and development
- ▶ Innovation and technology
- ▶ Funding and financial oversight

Volume 4 is divided into three parts, **Part A**, **Part B** and **Part C**, and includes a summary of the Royal Commission hearings and case studies.

Volume 5 is an Appendices which includes a list of witnesses, consultations, community forums, background papers, reports and other publications.

It is important to note that although the two Commissioners, Lynelle Briggs and Tony Pagone presented the final report together, they did not have consensus on all recommendations. One such example was governance. Throughout the report the terms listed in the table below have been used to refer to bodies responsible for recommendations in either of the two proposed models: the Independent Commission model or Government Leadership model.

Term	Independent Commission model	Government Leadership model
System Governor	Australian Aged Care Commission	Australian Department of Health and Aged Care
Quality Regulator	Australian Aged Care Commission	Aged Care Safety and Quality Authority
Prudential Regulator	Australian Aged Care Commission	Australian Department of Health and Aged Care
Pricing Authority	Australian Aged Pricing Authority	Independent Hospital and Aged Care Pricing Authority

What are the recommendations for the sector?

A total of 148 recommendations were listed in the final report which was described by the Commissioners as “fundamental and systematic aged care reform”.

A New System:

- ▶ An **integrated system for the long-term support and care** of older people and their ongoing community engagement.
- ▶ The new system will replace the current Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP), Home Care Packages (HCP), Residential and Respite programs and instead, include **five service categories: Respite Supports, Social Supports, Assistive Technology and Home Modifications, Care at Home and Residential Care.**
- ▶ A **new Aged Care Act** that will replace the current Aged Care Act (1997), enforced no later than **1 July 2023.**

Governance:

- ▶ A **System Governor** to provide leadership and oversight and shape the system to be established by **2023.**
- ▶ Establishment of a **Pricing Authority** to determine pricing (including subsidies and user contribution).
- ▶ Establish an **Aged Care Advisory Council** to advise the System Governor in regards to policy.
- ▶ An independent **Inspector-General of Aged Care** to identify and investigate systemic issues and to publish reports of its findings.
- ▶ Fundamental restructure of The Department of Health which should immediately be **renamed The Department of Health and Aged Care** and establish new regional offices to support providers and consumers.
- ▶ Form a **Council of Elders by 1 July 2021** to advise the Minister and Department.

Quality and Safety:

- ▶ A plan to **deliver, measure and report on high quality aged care.**
- ▶ Establish a **dementia support pathway by 1 January 2023** for people living with dementia, their carers and families following diagnosis. Including education, peer support services, counselling, respite and advice for access to care.
- ▶ Rename the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care as the **‘Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health and Aged Care’.**
- ▶ **A review of the Aged Care Quality Standards** by The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health and Aged Care by **31 December 2022.** This should also include periodic review of the standards.
- ▶ **Star ratings for aged care providers** that are published on My Aged Care established by 1 July 2022.
- ▶ **Mandated cultural safety training** for all aged care staff by **1 July 2022.**

Program Redesign:

- ▶ A more **restorative and preventative approach** to care, with increased access to allied health care in both home and residential aged care.
- ▶ Up to date and readily **accessible information** about care options and services, and **care finders** to support older people to navigate the aged care system to be established by 1 July 2023.

Carers and Volunteers:

- ▶ **Linking My Aged Care and Carer Gateway** by 1 July 2022.
- ▶ Establishing and funding a **community-based Carers Hub** network by 1 July 2023.
- ▶ Provision of an **additional entitlement to unpaid carer’s leave** under the Fair Work Act by 30 September 2022.

- ▶ Any provider that uses volunteers must establish a **Volunteer's Coordinator**.
- ▶ **Additional funding** provided to volunteer programs and community visitor scheme.

Aged Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People:

- ▶ An **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care pathway** which is block funded to provide culturally safe and flexible aged care to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people wherever they live.
- ▶ An **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Commissioner** should be established by 1 July 2023.
- ▶ By 1 December 2022, the government should establish a national **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Plan**.

Better Access to Health Care:

- ▶ Improved **access to health care** for older people, including a new primary care model, access to multidisciplinary outreach services and a Senior Dental Benefits Scheme.
- ▶ Funding and **accreditation of Aged Care General Practitioners by 1 January 2024**.
- ▶ **24 hr on-call services** for all aged care recipients, their families and aged care staff.
- ▶ Increased **funding and access to Older Person's Mental Health Services** by 1 January 2022.
- ▶ **MBS funded telehealth services** by 1 November 2021.
- ▶ Providers delivering personal care must utilise a **digital care management system** that works alongside My Health Record by 1 July 2022.

Aged Care Workforce:

- ▶ The Australian Government should **establish an Aged Care Workforce Planning Division** within the Australian Department of Health **by 1 January 2022**.
- ▶ Professionalising the **aged care workforce** through changes to education, training, wages, labour conditions and career progression.

- ▶ **A National Registration of personal care workers by 1 July 2022**. Registration will include mandatory minimum qualifications (Cert. III), ongoing training requirements, English proficiency, criminal history and a code of conduct.
- ▶ **Mandated dementia and palliative care training** for all aged care workers **by 1 July 2022**.
- ▶ Development of aged care short courses for **ongoing professional development**.
- ▶ **Increases in Award wages** to reflect the value of aged care work.

Provider Governance:

- ▶ Approved providers should provide an **Annual Report to the Department of Health and Aged Care**.
- ▶ A new governance standard that requires providers to **establish a Care Governance Committee** in charge of quality and safety.
- ▶ Australian Government **support to improve provider governance**.

Quality Regulation and Advocacy:

- ▶ **Periodical reports** from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner.
- ▶ **Graded assessment of service performance** against the Aged Care Quality Standards from 1 July 2022.
- ▶ **Improved complaints handling procedures** and regularly published reports.
- ▶ **Civil penalties for providers and staff** who breach the new Act and/or duty of care and compensation for victims.
- ▶ **An independent review** of the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission by 1 May 2022.

Funding:

- ▶ A **simpler and fairer approach to personal contributions and means testing**.
- ▶ Financing arrangements drawing on a new **aged care levy (1% of personal taxable income)** to deliver appropriate funding by 1 July 2022.
- ▶ Funding to **reimburse providers for the cost of education and training** for staff.

Recommendations for Home and Community Care

The following includes an outline of the recommendations that are associated with Home Care and CHSP under the proposed 'Care at Home' program.

- ▶ **A Care at Home category** within the new aged care system **by 1 July 2024**. The System Governor will be responsible for the Care at Home category and it will include:
 - Care management
 - Living supports, including cleaning, laundry, preparation of meals, shopping for groceries, gardening and home maintenance
 - Personal, clinical, enabling and therapeutic care, including nursing care, allied health care and restorative care interventions
 - Palliative and end-of-life care
- ▶ A lead provider will be chosen by a consumer to deliver services, address assessment needs, monitor care needs and reassess where applicable.
- ▶ The Care at Home category must include **Allied Health care by 1 July 2023**.
- ▶ **Quality indicators and Quality of Life Assessment for Home and Community Care** to be developed by The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health and Aged Care by **1 July 2023**. Performance will be reported publicly against benchmarks.
- ▶ **A single assessment service** that combines the RAS and ACAT by **1 July 2023**.
- ▶ **Assign a qualified Care Manager by 1 July 2022 by a lead provider** to each person receiving care to implement, monitor and review care plans.
- ▶ **Grant funded** categories in the new system including **respite, social support, assistive technology and home modifications**.
- ▶ Immediate increase of Home Care Packages to **clear the National Prioritisation System by 21 December 2021**. Packages allocated should only be that of which the recipient has been approved for.
 - ▶ **Packages should be allocated within one month of assessment**.
 - ▶ Public quarterly reporting on the National Prioritisation System including justification for delays from 1 March 2021.
 - ▶ **Increase the time to accept a Home Care Package** from 50 days to 150 days.
 - ▶ By 1 July 2024, the new Act should require a home care service that provides care management, personal care, clinical care, enabling and therapeutic care, or palliative and end-of-life care to be **accredited** in order to receive Australian Government subsidies.
 - ▶ **Amend the indexation arrangements** for home care and the CHSP so that subsidy rates are increased on 1 July each year.
 - ▶ An **individualised budget** for care at home services.
 - ▶ The funding for a person receiving care at home should be no more than the funding amount that would be made available to provide care for them at a residential aged care service.
 - ▶ The Australian Government should **pay home care providers for services** delivered or liabilities incurred from Home Care Packages **on accrual**.
 - ▶ A **standardised statement format** for all care at home services and costs.
 - ▶ **Quarterly reporting** about daily hours of direct care for each service.
 - ▶ Individuals who require social supports, assistive technologies and home modifications, or care at home **should not be required to contribute** to the costs of that support.
 - ▶ **Financial reports** submitted to the prudential regulator.

How has the Government responded?

“I warned the country we should brace for impact and be prepared for what would follow and it has been a harrowing process.”

Prime Minister Scott Morrison

The Government’s initial response to the Final Report was **announced** on 1 March 2021. The Health Minister Greg Hunt mapped out a **\$452 million immediate response** to the report built on five “pillars”:

1. Home care
2. Quality and safety
3. Services and sustainability
4. Workforce; and
5. Governance

These pillars include immediate measures such as:

- ▶ **\$18.4 million** for greater oversight of home care packages, program of audits of 500 home care providers to reduce unjustified administrative charges, and better fraud controls.
- ▶ **\$32 million** for strengthening provider quality including expanded powers for the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission including a “Senior Restraint Practitioner” to boost regulation of physical and chemical restraints.

- ▶ **\$279.9 million** for residential care temporary financial support including continuation of the 30% rise in homeless and viability supplements until the end of June, and targeted support for residential aged care providers in financial stress.
- ▶ **\$91.8 million** to attract 18,000 job seekers to enter the home and residential aged care workforce.
- ▶ **\$30.1 million** for Governance including training for aged home board members, stronger quality standards, and an overhaul of the Aged Care Act which has been in place since 1997.

A full allocation of funding will be announced in the Federal budget and as per recommendation 145 in the Final Report, the full Government response is expected to be announced by **31 May 2021**.

How can providers prepare for change?

In the coming years, the aged care sector will go through a period of significant systematic change and reform. Although it is difficult to determine exactly how and when these changes will occur, we know a new aged care roadmap will be released to outline the rollout of future changes. But, how can you proactively prepare for change now? The best way to do this is through scenario planning. Consider which of these recommendations will most significantly impact your staff, clients and organisation. Then determine the challenges and create strategies to best respond.

Below are some few points for consideration:



WORKFORCE - consider how you will adapt your recruitment processes to meet the demand for care at home. What extra roles will need to be recruited for over the next 5 years? Consider how you might draw on skills from other sectors.



EDUCATION & TRAINING - consider how you will support your staff to meet the mandatory requirements for qualifications and professional development. What internal infrastructure needs to be implemented? How will you work with external Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)?



GOVERNANCE - consider the skills mix of your Board, Executives and Management. Do you have the expertise required to navigate organisational change to adhere to the recommendations?



FINANCING - consider ways in which you would finance additional costs that are not covered by funding, particularly if prices for service provision are set by an independent body. This may also include the capital required to transform your organisation to respond to relevant recommendations.



OPERATIONS - consider how these recommendations may impact your current organisational policies and procedures. How might these be updated, by whom and when? Consider your change management strategies, how will you manage and communicate change?



REPORTING - consider how increased reporting and transparency would impact your organisation? Who will be responsible for this? This may require improved IT systems, database upgrades and IT roadmaps to produce comprehensive reporting and clearer data patterns. Consider how you can self-publish and share data in order to practice transparency for your consumers, clients.



QUALITY & SAFETY - consider how quality is valued, resourced, measured and reported in your organisation and how you can improve. Is quality based on compliance or excellence? What might the new quality indicators for home care look like?



INNOVATION - instead of waiting for Government to tell you what to do, take this time to research, design and co-design innovative solutions.

Although the recommendations may be somewhat overwhelming, it is important to begin preparing for change. The proposed timeline for the implementation of the recommendations is five years however; some changes could be implemented as early as mid-late 2021.



To stay up to date with important sector changes and announcements related to the Royal Commission, [sign up to our monthly eBulletin here.](#)

To access the Final Report and supplementary documents, please see the links below:

- ▶ [Full report](#)
- ▶ [Executive summary](#)
- ▶ [Full list of recommendations](#)

HERE ARE 10 KEY TAKE AWAYS FROM THE FINAL REPORT: [CLICK HERE](#)