

SUBMISSION TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION

Questions about you

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Do you live in a remote, rural or regional area? : I do not live in a remote, rural or regional area

Previous submission:

This submission is on behalf of : Government or Government Entity

Name of service provider or other person : Local Government Association of South Australia

About your submission

Which of the Royal Commission's terms of reference is your submission about?: Challenges and opportunities to deliver accessible, affordable and high quality aged care services to those who wish to remain living at home and/or those living in remote, rural and regional Australia

What, if any, specific concern/s does your submission relate to? Independence, choice and control over care; Loneliness, disengagement, disconnection and/or boredom

What type of aged care services does your submission address? Entry level help or care in people's own home (such as help getting dressed, transport, or help with meals and cooking)

Your Submission

What would you like to tell the Royal Commission?

Like the local communities they serve, councils in South Australia have a strong sense that there is a future role for local government in supporting the needs of people as they get older. However, the Commonwealth reforms have created a high degree of uncertainty for councils and our communities.

Local government should be recognised as a planner, funder and deliverer of home and community services and other spheres of government should work in partnership with councils to leverage our unique position to provide a holistic approach to social inclusion and support for people as they get older.

The Commonwealth should appropriately fund local government to take advantage of our points of difference. Councils deliver cost effective and efficient services with block funding as councils contribute significant in-kind funding which stretches the Federal funding even further.

Councils add value through our volunteer networks and significant infrastructure, such as kiosks, libraries and community centres. Councils combine our expertise in social support and community wellbeing services.

Local government in South Australia welcomes the recent Federal Budget announcement to extend the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) for two years from 2020/21 and calls on the Commonwealth to commit to ongoing recurrent funding beyond the term of this extension.

This is now the third extension to this program initially from 2018 to 2020 and now 2022. This is a critical issue for local government as it is finding itself in an extended period of uncertainty. The additional negative effects that have occurred with this milestone continually being extended have affected long term program planning, staffing, moral and service capabilities. While being able to mitigate these negative effects, ideally the situation needs some clarity with recurrent funding being announced.

The major impact on local government in recent years has been the move to integrate the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) and the Home Care Packages program into a single care at home program. Local government has traditionally been block funded to provide services, if the individualised funding model was to be implemented business as usual would not be feasible for many councils, and many have indicated they would exit out of aged care services if CHSP funding was not available.

Many South Australian councils are actively involved in wellness and reablement type programs, the value of group socialisation and wellness activities cannot be underestimated and a process needs to be developed that will enhance the opportunity for local government to continue to provide opportunities in this space.

For many years South Australian councils have used block funding to provide a broad range of services and programs to enable older citizens to remain in their own homes. However without ongoing Commonwealth funding support, there is a risk that South Australian councils will either withdraw from the provision of these services, leaving communities without the support they rely on; or they will fund the ongoing delivery of these services through their own revenue sources, which would increase council rates and add to the cost of living pressures of ratepaying households.

South Australian councils are connected and responsive to the needs of older people, they take a community development based approach, providing universal services in a holistic way based on their knowledge of their communities.

A noteworthy point of difference for councils is the extensive use of volunteers who contribute significantly to the delivery of a range services across the service spectrum. With the use of volunteers, South Australian councils are offering essential services such as transport at a significantly reduced rate making it affordable and accessible for older people.

Local government's role in providing a sense of community is clearly a major focus for South Australian councils, who note their role extends further than the direct provision of aged care services. Many councils have strategies that link aged care to community wellbeing and social inclusion, such as community development plans and active ageing strategies.

There is considerable anecdotal evidence that many older people and those who support them find navigating the My Aged Care system to be a challenge. South Australian councils are reporting that older residents are contacting councils by phone or in person seeking help and support, essentially because councils have a very long history of providing home care services. When people seek out support they are often in crisis and even those with IT skills are requesting someone to talk through their options and navigate the system with them.

South Australian councils recognise that they are often the first point of contact for older members of the community, who have a strong sense of trust for council services. This often results in councils supporting the more vulnerable members of society and providing advice, advocacy and referral to other services. Consideration should be given to the most appropriate model to deliver advocacy services to ensure independence and transparency and whether it is appropriate to have advocacy services wrapped up in package funding.

Much has been written about the unique perspective that local government brings to the provision of services and programs for the ageing. Local government has a view of older people as citizens of their local community, not consumers or clients of a service. In particular, local government centre-based programs, which focus on social connection, have complemented home and community care services through reconnecting, re-abling and fostering community connections, networks and friendships between local people. Education/awareness raising should be available to the whole community about what person-centred/personalised care 'looks like' and the importance that wellbeing and maximising independence plays in enhancing individual health and wellbeing. Councils have a holistic community development role, which seeks to build the community's social capital and wellbeing through inclusive programs that increase community participation and social connectedness and support those people wishing to remain living independently in their own homes.

Supporting material provided:

Can this submission be made public I agree to my submission being made public under my name