

# SNAPSHOT: Our position statement on Aged Care Reforms



Aboriginal Health Council  
of South Australia Ltd.

## Caring for Our Elders

### Aged Care Reform and What It Means for Our Communities

Following the 2021 Aged Care Royal Commission, the Australian Government has introduced major reforms to improve the care and rights of older people. The new [Aged Care Act 2024](#), that comes into effect 1 November 2025, will significantly affect Elders, Aboriginal communities and the Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector.

These reforms offer an opportunity to deliver aged care that is culturally safe, accessible and respectful of our Elders wisdom and deep cultural ties. But this will only happen if the unique social, emotional, spiritual and health needs of our Elders are prioritised.

As the peak body for Aboriginal health in South Australia, AHCSA urges Government to act now. The new system must reflect and uphold the voices, values and rights of our Elders.

## Our Concerns

While the Government has made commitments to improve aged care, there are still serious concerns that pose immediate risks to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, including;

- **No independent First Nations Aged Care Commissioner.**
- **Slow progress on Royal Commission recommendations. Four years on, many Aboriginal-specific reforms remain unimplemented.**
- **Financial barriers and mandatory Co-contributions.**
- **Lack of Cultural safety in aged care.**
- **Lack of engagement and co-design with the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector.**
- **Fee pressures on ACCHOs. Forcing Aboriginal organisations to charge Elders, undermines community-controlled principles and reduces access to culturally safe care.**
- **Complex systems for our Elders and community to navigate complex aged care.**

Without urgent attention, these gaps could leave our Elders behind.



Recent data from AIHW estimates 1 or 2 in every 10 older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people eligible for aged care is a Stolen Generation Survivor. (Lowitja Institute, 2025).

## 243,700

First Nations people in 2018–19 reported that they needed to but did not see a health care provider on at least one occasion in the previous 12 months. Within this, 34% said cost was a factor. (AIHW, 2025).

## 17.9%

From the 2021 Census for First Nations people, 17.9% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island respondents aged 50 years or over reported a need for assistance with core activities. (GEN Aged Care Data, 2025).

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## AHCSA Recommendations

1. Establish a permanent and Independent First Nations Aged Care Commissioner
2. Implement the Interim First Nations Commissioner's Recommendations in full
3. Act on The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety Recommendations
4. The Elder Care Support Program (ECS) become an ongoing program with further expansion and investment.
5. Work with our sector to co-design and implement First Nations Assessment Organisations
6. Protect Elders from Financial Hardship and co-contributions
7. Exempt Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations from Charging Fees
8. Recognise ACCHO Leadership in Aged Care Delivery – invest in our sector
9. Recognise and address the unique challenges in Regional and Remote Communities



By 2031 it is expected that 1 in 5 Indigenous people will be aged 50 years or over (20%)  
*(AIHW, 2024).*

48%

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders assessed for care did NOT access the care they were eligible for  
*(Pearson et al, 2024)*

17.6%

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were aged 50+ in 2021 - almost double from 9.9% in 2001.  
*(ABS 2021, cited in Pearson et al 2024).*

## What You Can Do

We invite Aboriginal organisations, community members, and Elders to:

- Stay informed about the upcoming changes to aged care.
- Share your voice -your experiences and cultural knowledge are vital to shaping a system that works for our people.
- Call on decision-makers to priorities Aboriginal Led solutions to ensure our sector is resourced and respected.
- Connect with AHCSA to learn more, share your concerns, or get involved in advocacy. You can also read our full position statement on Aged Care Reforms at [ahcsa.org.au](https://ahcsa.org.au)

Together, we can make sure our Elders receive the care they deserve. Aged Care that respects culture, community, and Country.