



A SUBMISSION TO DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH AND AGED CARE -
NEW AGED CARE ACT
CONSULTATION

Submission – New Aged Care Act

Submitted by Hon Bob Katter

2024

Overview

The office of Bob Katter, Federal Member for Kennedy, has reviewed the Aged Care Exposure draft, consulted with constituents and attended the New Aged Care Act consultation workshop in Cairns on 30 January.

Our understanding is that the new Aged Care Act includes a Statement of Rights for Older People, strengthened regulatory powers, and criminal penalties for providers doing the wrong thing.

With an ageing population in Australia and the number and percentage of older Australians expected to continue to grow by 2066, it is projected that older people in Australia will make up between 21% and 23% of the total population (ABS 2018). This is a growing sector of the Kennedy electorate, and a safe, effective aged care sector is important to the people of this community.

We understand the new Aged Care Act will be a person-centred system to deliver better outcomes for older people and essentially concentrate on keeping older Australians for longer in their own homes with support.

It is also important to highlight the unique aspects of aged care in Far North Queensland.

These include:

- **Geographical Isolation:** Far North Queensland's vast and sparsely populated landscape poses logistical challenges in accessing essential healthcare services, including aged care.
- **Limited Infrastructure:** The region's remote areas often lack adequate infrastructure, such as healthcare facilities and transportation networks, exacerbating difficulties in delivering timely and comprehensive aged care services.
- **Workforce Shortages:** Recruiting and retaining skilled aged care professionals in regional and remote areas is challenging, leading to gaps in service provision and increased reliance on limited local resources.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Addressing the cultural preferences and unique needs of Indigenous aged care residents, including the desire to remain connected to their land and communities, requires culturally sensitive care approaches and tailored service delivery models.

Overview cont...

Through various consultation methods, the critical issues on the ground in Far North Queensland include:

- Workforce challenges including aged care support workers, and medically trained doctors and nurses
- Diet and nutrition – particularly consistent focus
- Increasing demand for older persons living with dementia
- Organisational governance – better support and training required for executive
- Access to community supports for older people with behavioural mental health issues
- Pathways for First Australians to reside or transfer to 'On Land' aged care

Improving aged care services in Far North Queensland requires targeted interventions to address doctor shortages, enhance executive leadership capabilities, and provide culturally sensitive care for Indigenous residents.

By addressing these challenges collaboratively, stakeholders can ensure the provision of high-quality, equitable aged care services that meet the diverse needs of the region's aging population.

Recommendations

Proposed recommendations and priorities

- Safeguarding people and concentrating on the duty of care to residents or elderly in their home
- Accountability by service providers and Aged Care residential homes – important for governance of these and transparency
- Home care packages to include internet as part of the package – added to this rural area may have poor to non-existent reception which hinders communication and computer access
- Elderly 'on country' requests – frequently they want to remain in their own communities especially in rural settings where they have friends and family for support
- Timing of Aged Care packages – once assessed can take up to 12 months for service providers to be organised for home support. This is too long for vulnerable people to wait.
- Distinct lack of workforce – conditions of pay lower than at NDIS
Attracts works force with English as second language
 - Require Certificate III in Individual Support to work in aged care sector – costs for training (where as no certification needed to work with NDIS self-managed clients.
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- Education – needs to be more information where people go to find out what is available and for under 65's where they go for help if are ineligible for support under the Aged Care program.
- Companies and not-for-profits are refusing to accept Medicare referrals (for example, OT assessments) because they prefer to do overcharged assessments for NDIS participants
- Need for adequate Aged Care services and accommodation in regional and remote areas – the current alternative is that we are sending our elderly to the coast to die alone.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Office of Bob Katter, Federal Member for Kennedy would like to sincerely thank all parties that have assisted in the development of this submission.

It is greatly appreciated.