

# Wintringham



## RESPONSE TO NEW AGED CARE ACT SERVICES LIST

OCTOBER 2024

BRYAN LIPMANN AM  
FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, WINTRINGHAM

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....3

RECOMMENDATIONS.....4

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO.....5

50 YEARS AND OLDER: HOMELESS PEOPLE AGE PREMATURELY.....5

CARE MANAGEMENT .....6

CAPPING HOURS OF SERVICE.....8

HOARDING AND SQUALOR.....9

EXPENSES TO MAINTAIN PERSONAL AFFAIRS .....10

*Wintringham is a not-for-profit company that works to support, and house impoverished older people aged 50 and over who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. Wintringham currently operates in Victoria and Tasmania.*

---

## INTRODUCTION

Wintringham appreciates the opportunity to provide this response to the *New Aged Care Act – Service List* consultation paper.

Wintringham’s model of service delivery is fundamentally different from most other aged care service providers. With a dedicated focus on supporting older people who have experienced homelessness, we endeavour to live up to our motto of providing “A Home ‘til Stumps”. This means that from the time one of our outreach workers makes contact with a vulnerable older person, we aim to care for that person until their death. This has resulted in Wintringham developing a range of housing options and extensive support services including community aged care and disability, as well as a wide range of residential aged care services. Our model uses State and Commonwealth funding to provide care and housing to elderly disadvantaged citizens regardless of whether they live in country regions or metropolitan suburbs.

---

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### RECOMMENDATION 1

Expand the definition of *diverse cultural activities* to include people who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness and care leavers.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

Introduce an additional *care management* service type to holistically meet the complex care needs of diverse aged care populations.

### RECOMMENDATION 3

Provide flexibility to increase hours of *domestic assistance* and *home maintenance and repairs* when required to meet exceptional client care needs.

### RECOMMENDATION 4

Review the use of the term *Squalor*, and consider replacement with *Environmental Neglect*.

### RECOMMENDATION 5

*Hoarding and Squalor* services should be accessible through the Home Support Program as a stated service. We recommend they remain in the Act under both Home Support and CHSP service options.

### RECOMMENDATION 6

Supports for people who live with *Hoarding and Squalor* must include regular monitoring and environmental maintenance, above and beyond routine *Domestic Assistance*.

### RECOMMENDATION 7

Expand *expenses to maintain personal affairs* to include other essential services that people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, require so they can safely receive aged care services in the community.

---

## WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Guided by principles of social justice, Wintringham has a single mission to provide dignified, high-quality care and accommodation to people aged 50 and over, who are experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness and who are financially and socially disadvantaged.

Wintringham operates innovative and integrated programs that provide a continuum of care; ranging from extensive assertive outreach programs, social housing (862 units; all with housing support), in-home aged care (900+ packages), a registered Supported Residential Service (SRS), and eight residential aged care sites (352 beds), which are in receipt of the Homeless Supplement. With over 1000 dedicated staff, Wintringham supports over 3,000 clients each day in Victoria and Tasmania.

Our pioneering work with elderly people experiencing homelessness has received national and international recognition, including the United Nations Human Settlements Habitat Scroll of Honour, the “most prestigious human settlement award in the world” and to date, the only time the award has gone to an Australian organisation.

---

## 50 YEARS AND OLDER: HOMELESS PEOPLE AGE PREMATURELY

Working with the older people who have experienced homelessness presents particular problems for service delivery as this group of people often present with premature ageing and complex care needs (physical, psychological and social), combined with a general reluctance to accept services. This reluctance derives from a strong sense of independence and a history of demeaning experiences with a range of health or community care providers. Many clients who have experienced homelessness would also meet the criteria set out for care leavers.

Our model of care has been developed in direct response to these ‘special needs’ of our client group. We recognize that people experiencing homelessness have their own culture, including ideas, customs and social behaviour, which requires a culturally appropriate service provider. Many clients who have been, or who are experiencing, homelessness arrive at Wintringham in very poor health, undernourished and frequently frightened or so 'battle hardened' that they are difficult to communicate with. In addition, it is quite normal for our clients to have had a very isolated life with little or no contact with family members.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare recognises premature ageing within a homeless population<sup>1</sup>. Premature ageing is caused by the disproportionately high rate of preventable diseases, progressive morbidity and premature death prevalent in the homeless population. Based on our own experience Wintringham defines older people as those who are 50 years and older. It makes a key difference to service provision if we ‘label’ a client aged and homeless, rather than homeless and aged. Wintringham has successfully secured acknowledgement from the Australian Commonwealth Government that the lifestyle of many of our homeless men and women had prematurely aged them; similar to the argument Aboriginal representatives were making, that this premature ageing should make them eligible for Commonwealth aged care from the age of 50 years, instead of having to wait until 65. As a result,

---

<sup>1</sup>AIHW Older Australians Web Report, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/older-people/older-australians/contents/housing-and-living-arrangements#Homelessness%20and%20insecure%20housing>

Wintringham (and other homeless aged care providers), deliver residential and community-based aged care services to clients aged 50 and above.

Homelessness leads to premature ageing, which increases an individual's ageing care needs. For people who have had this experience, their care needs are best met within an aged care service. Specifically, one designed for this client cohort. We currently run community based social support groups specifically targeting older people who have experienced homelessness. Many of the attendees are also care leavers. The social support needs and behavioral support needs of this client cohort means that they often are excluded from mainstream social support activities. The skills of the facilitator need to match the cultural needs of these cohorts, focusing on successful social interactions to enhance community engagement. It is a specific model of support that varies greatly to the social support and community engagement delivered for mainstream older Australians.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1**

Expand the definition of diverse cultural activities to include people who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness and care leavers.

---

## **CARE MANAGEMENT**

Care Management is of greatest concern to Wintringham. As we deliver services to clients who have experienced homelessness, or those who are care leavers, it costs more to deliver care management services.

The success of delivering a home care package to an older person who has been homeless, or is a care leaver, hinges completely on the relationship that is built with a key person from Wintringham. This is backed by evidence based, trauma informed practice, and has proven to be true in our 30+ years of experience working with these client groups. Having a single point of contact for all package, care and general life enquiries is what enables the successful delivery of a community based aged care services, as well as preventing premature entry into Residential Aged Care.

### **CARE MANAGEMENT - MANDATORY**

Wintringham delivers care management that is consistent with the Commonwealth guidelines and requirements. Our care management team have higher caseloads than other Home Care Package providers, so we can appropriately meet the needs of our clients. Our Care Managers work at a 1:30 care manager client ratio, while we are aware of mainstream providers who work as high as a 1:100 ratio.

We have relatively low case loads so we can meet the needs of our clients. Wintringham currently charges 20% of package funds so we can deliver our specialised care management. **If care management is capped to 10% Wintringham would not be able to meet the needs of our clients nor be viable.**

A percentage approach to delivering care reduces the efficacy of a Home Care Package, as it does not enable service delivery to flexibly meet the needs of the individual client. We cannot increase our caseloads and continue to appropriately support clients experiencing homelessness.

Our clients have experienced trauma, long term disadvantage, early ageing, frailty and are vulnerable. Most have no family members or informal supports involved in their care. This results in some additional costs associated with meeting the mandatory care requirements;

- increased time to create relationships and build rapport before assessment and care planning can be completed
- needing to be available for a higher number of phone calls and contacts from clients, particularly those with cognitive impairments
- increased number of home visits required to meet mandatory care requirements (e.g. assessment completed over 3 home visits rather than 1)
- higher rates of clients who have complex community services involved, such as mental health, disability and drug and alcohol services – our care managers must liaise and collaborate with these services to ensure effective service delivery for our clients
- finding service providers who have the required skill set to meet the needs of the client (e.g. high-level behaviour management skills, trauma informed care, harm minimisation approach)

Our care managers need to spend more time with their clients than the proposed cap allows.

## **CARE MANAGEMENT – FLEXIBLE SUPPORT**

We know that mandatory care management is insufficient for our client cohort. Our clients require additional flexible support, from the same care manager they know and trust, to help them with a range of crisis and complex day to day issues. For people who have experienced homelessness, or are care leavers, they often have no one else in their lives to support them with these tasks, or they are unable to engage in their aged care services, without additional support.

Examples of the type of work Wintringham care managers currently provide above the mandatory care requirements includes;

- Supporting clients to attend allied health and medical appointments outside of their care plan that they have no other way of attending
- Assessing and managing high risk client homes, in the absence of informal supports. Additional support provided to manage environmental risks (includes WHS specialist assessment, subsequent report writing, additional home visits, pest control arrangements, industrial cleans).
- Arranging maintenance or repairs to a client's home to enable safe delivery of care, and safety for the client living in the home (i.e. mould removal, pest control, smoke alarms, utility repairs).
- Advocate to a landlord for maintenance and repairs to rental properties
- Support to manage a crisis (e.g. power disconnected due to an unpaid bill)
- Advocacy and support in managing financial & legal matters (VCAT, Financial Administrators and Guardians, Fines and Court Support).
- Additional home visits for client not at home, or welfare checks with emergency services
- Help to escape from violent or abusive situations
- 24-hour case management services

The current “defined services list” does not include a service that would enable Wintringham to deliver appropriate support to older people who have experienced homelessness or are care leavers. Without this many vulnerable clients will not be able to receive aged care supports in the community, or providers like Wintringham will not be financially viable.

The introduction of an additional service type to enable this type of work is critical, options include;

- Additional service under Care Management specified for Diverse Needs Groups
- Additional therapeutic support linked to psychosocial support needs, similar to the NDIS service type

Clients could be assessed against a set criterion which determines eligibility before a provider can deliver these specialised services. The implementation of the homelessness Base Care Tariff into Residential Aged Care is a good example of how additional funds can be effectively ring fenced for providers and clients who truly need the additional support.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 2**

Introduce an additional *care management* service type to holistically meet the complex care needs of diverse aged care populations.

---

## **CAPPING HOURS OF SERVICE**

Capping of *Domestic Assistance* and *Home Maintenance and Repairs* reduces client ability to manage their care needs with the support of their care manager. There are some instances where clients require more than the capped hours. An individualised system which is client led should have mechanisms to support this in extraordinary circumstances.

Example of these include

- Clients with large regional properties with extensive gardening support needs
- Client who live with hoarding and environmental neglect

#### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

Provide flexibility to increase hours of *domestic assistance* and *home maintenance and repairs* when required to meet exceptional client care needs.



---

## HOARDING AND SQUALOR

Wintringham is thrilled to see the inclusion of hoarding and squalor specific services within the Aged Care Act, recognising the complexity of supporting older Australians with these conditions.

Many providers working in this area are moving away from the term *Squalor* to and are instead using the term *Environmental Neglect*.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

Review the use of the term *Squalor*, and consider replacement with *Environmental Neglect*.

Webinars held in October 2024 from Department of Health and Aged Care stated that Hoarding and Squalor services would only be available via CHSP funding, the Act does not appear to reflect this.

Wintringham supports the inclusion of Hoarding and Squalor services within the Home Support Program as they are essential for successful delivery of aged care services to some older people.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5**

*Hoarding and Squalor* services should be accessible through the Home Support Program as a stated service. We recommend they remain in the Act under both Home Support and CHSP service options.

The Act does not appear to capture the full support needs of older people who live with squalor / environmental neglect and hoarding behaviours.

Additional *monitoring and environmental maintenance* must be incorporated into the delivery of care for people with squalor / environmental neglect and hoarding. One-off cleans are not considered best practice for this client group<sup>2</sup>, although we acknowledge that they are sometimes required for the health and safety of the client, and to enable ongoing service delivery. Working in a trauma informed way with people who hoard is often a slow process and requires adequate time, often multiple times a week, to facilitate delivery of other aged care services in a safe way, and continue the momentum of maintaining their home.

These supports will be required in addition to the annual cap outlined in the Act – 52 hours of domestic assistance annually will not meet the required minimum standards of care for older people who experienced hoarding and live with squalor or environmental neglect.

---

<sup>2</sup> Make Safe: Guidance for services working with people living with hoarding and environmental neglect <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/make-safe-guidance-services-working-people-living-hoarding-and-environmental-neglect-word>

## RECOMMENDATION 6

Supports for people who live with *Hoarding and Squalor* must include regular monitoring and environmental maintenance, above and beyond routine *Domestic Assistance*.

---

## EXPENSES TO MAINTAIN PERSONAL AFFAIRS

We are pleased to see the Act recognise that people who experience homelessness required additional financial assistance to maintain their personal affairs. The addition of this service type into the Act will improve home support for many highly disadvantaged older people.

The type of support that an elderly client who is sleeping rough, living in a caravan, or a dangerous rooming house varies greatly from the needs of mainstream older Australians. Without safe and secure accommodation the goals, care plan, and subsequent services engaged need to be more flexible and varied.

In addition to the phone and internet costs identified, through our 30+ years of supporting this cohort of clients, we have found other essential services and items are occasionally required to facilitate delivery of care, and support people to continue living in the community.

Being able to purchase items, such as those outlined below, are a short-term expense, which enables long term care in the community. This ultimately meets the goals of our clients and is more cost effective for Aged Care services as it prevents premature entry into aged care.

Emergency Material Aid	<p>Short term purchase of essential medical or food items are critical in keeping our clients out of hospital and living safely in the community.</p> <p>This type of intervention is often short term, while other care management support is being engaged to assist with budgeting or referral to financial counselling.</p>
Whitegoods and Essential household Items	<p>Many people who have been homeless lack the basic household items that they require to manage and receive daily care. This might be a large item, such as a fridge or washing machine, but may be as small as new bed linen or a microwave.</p> <p>These items are a one-off cost with long term benefits for the health, well being and safety of the individual, enabling them to fully engage with their aged care services.</p>

	<p><b>EXAMPLES</b></p> <p>Without a fridge clients cannot store pre-prepared meals. Or they cannot store their groceries so they can access meal preparation services. Refrigerated medications are not an option.</p> <p>Without a washing machine our clients would be required to access public laundromats, which are often not accessible due to their frailty and mobility requirements. The cost of support worker completing laundry tasks at a laundromat greatly increases the cost of this service and results in a poor utilisation of package funds (e.g. 1 hour of service to take clothes to and from a laundromat, compared to 20 minutes to turn on a washing machine and hang clothes in between delivery of other domestic assistance within the home).</p>
Heating or cooling	Heat and Cooling are critical for people living in substandard accommodation types, such as caravans. Without adequate heating and cooling these environments place frail and aged older people at risk during extreme weather events.
Emergency Housing	<p>The need to access to emergency respite or short-term accommodation is a rare but essential requirement for older people who are homeless.</p> <p>Being able to utilise home support funds to purchase this type of service facilitates delivery of all other care needs (e.g. personal care, meals, medication).</p> <p>Other funding is rarely available to provide emergency housing for older people and prevent them from sleeping on the streets. As a result, the ability to utilise package funds for this type of support would improve the health and quality of life outcomes for aged care clients who are homeless.</p>
Home Repairs	<p>For clients who have previously been homeless, or at risk of homelessness, increased flexibility in the provision of Home Maintenance and Repairs is required. The Act recognises that some repairs will be required to maintain safety, for Wintringham clients this will need to extend to professional pest extermination or industrial cleaning services to ensure Home Support services can safely be delivered.</p> <p>Many of our clients cannot afford these types of services and lack the capacity or informal supports to be able to prepare for and arrange.</p>

**RECOMMENDATION 7**

Expand *expenses to maintain personal affairs* to include other essential services that people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, require so they can safely receive aged care services in the community.