



NATSIAACC

National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Ageing
and Aged Care Council



Understanding the Inspector-General's Findings on My Aged Care 2025: Key Impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

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Source: [Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care, Review of My Aged Care – Final Report \(2025\)](#).

Purpose and Context

This paper provides a summary review of the Inspector-General of Aged Care's Review of My Aged Care, with a focus on its relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, Older People, families and communities.

In doing so, the paper also situates the Inspector-General's findings within issues that NATSIAACC has consistently raised through its advocacy, advice to government, and engagement with regulators and the Aged Care system. The report's findings therefore serve to reinforce, rather than introduce, concerns long articulated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their national peak body.

This resource is intended to support understanding and awareness and does not constitute legal or policy advice.

This document may be used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Providers, Boards, Staff, and Partners to support understanding of access and navigation issues identified in the Inspector-General of Aged Care's review of My Aged Care.

Background:

In March 2024, the Acting Inspector-General of Aged Care (IGAC), Mr Ian Yates AM, committed to conducting a review into the administration of My Aged Care (MAC), following extensive consultations with Aged Care stakeholders that highlighted widespread concerns about barriers to accessing and navigating the system.

Purpose of the Inspector General of Aged Care (IGAC):

Established following the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, the Inspector-General of Aged Care (IGAC) is mandated to examine whether the Aged Care system is delivering on its promise, not just in policy but also in practice, for every older person in Australia.

The primary objective of the office is to provide independent oversight of the Aged Care sector and drive system wide improvement through investigative means.



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Purpose/ objective of the report:

Following Mr Yates' intent, the current IGAC (Ms Natalie Siegel-Brown) completed the review with a focus on whether My Aged Care (MAC) is 'fit-for-purpose' in facilitating access to Aged Care for all Older People in Australia.

Specifically, the IGAC's review centres on three specific questions:

- 1) Is the front door to aged care open to everyone?
- 2) Is it easy to find, easy to use, fair and equitable?
- 3) Does it reflect the rights and dignity now enshrined in the new Aged Care Act 2024?

Relevant key findings:

Section 2.4.1 - Inequitable access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

The Inspector-General's review identifies significant inequities in access to My Aged Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

The report notes that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People experience "substantial additional difficulties with entering and navigating the Aged Care system" and are "not accessing Aged Care at a rate commensurate with their level of need."

Drawing on consistent testimony from consultations, the Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner (Andrea Kelly) reported that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are "just not getting through the front door of the aged care system."

On this basis, the Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner concluded that "My Aged Care as it currently operates, is not fit for purpose for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander users."

The Inspector-General of Aged Care agrees that this disparity must be addressed urgently and "in line with the Priority Reform principles underpinning the National Agreement on Closing the Gap."

Barriers to accessing My Aged Care

Low awareness and understanding:

The review found that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are unfamiliar with My Aged Care, indicating a "paucity in a targeted approach to promoting the system to communities."

The report also identifies a lack of understanding among some health professionals and MAC staff about "the lower eligibility age for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People," leading to "missed opportunities to engage and discuss assessments and available support."

As a result, “eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People may not be engaging with the system until they have an acute need.” These observations reflect long-standing concerns expressed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through NATSIAACC.

Digital literacy and access:

The Inspector-General identifies that a key barrier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is the government’s reliance on the MAC website and contact centre to deliver equitable access.

Citing *“Mapping the Digital Gap”*, the review notes that the Australian Digital Inclusion Index score for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People is “lower across all remoteness categories” and that “the scale of this gap... increases significantly with remoteness.”

Evidence to the review emphasised that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People “have limited or no digital literacy, hardware, access to computers and/or the Internet.” Limited coverage and high costs mean the digital divide can result in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People choosing not to attempt contact with MAC in the first place, or disengaging before receiving services.

Language barriers:

The report highlights that, in some communities, “English can often be an older person’s fourth or fifth language.”

My Aged Care engagement assumes English literacy and relies on “overly complex and inaccessible language.” Very few resources are translated, and those that exist “mostly include only a small fraction of the information that is available in English.”

Awareness of translation services is “minimal,” and they are “very rarely accessed,” further limiting engagement options. These findings reinforce concerns NATSIAACC has previously raised regarding accessibility and culturally appropriate communication.

Cultural safety, trauma and mistrust:

Cultural safety is defined in the report as “recognising, respecting and nurturing the unique cultural identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and meeting their needs, expectations and rights.”

However, the review notes “little acknowledgement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as a fundamental framework for supporting Cultural Safety in aged care services.”

Past experiences with government mean that engagement with My Aged Care can be “particularly traumatic” and may “contribute to individuals feeling unsafe and uncomfortable” when engaging or remaining engaged. The Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner observed that, “due to the ongoing impacts of colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are mistrustful of government and will often not express the truth when asked about their needs.”

The report also identifies a significant risk of re-traumatisation for Stolen Generation survivors when engaging with identification, assessment and intake processes.

Identification and documentation:

Rigid identification requirements were identified as a major barrier to access. These requirements can be “particularly traumatic for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, including Stolen Generation survivors who may not have a birth certificate.”

The report cites estimates that approximately “200,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Australia do not have a birth certificate, and may struggle to fully participate in society without this simple but vital document.” This limits their ability to fully participate in essential services, including Aged Care.

This contributes to the consensus that access to Aged Care services does not reflect the level of need among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

Broader findings relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Beyond Section 2.4.1, the report identifies system-wide issues that interact with the barriers described above, including:

- Low awareness and understanding of My Aged Care.
- Complex, process-heavy pathways that require People to repeat their story and navigate multiple hand-offs.
- Over-reliance on digital and phone channels, contributing to digital exclusion.
- Workforce capacity and capability constraints, including inconsistent training and cultural competence.
- Delays and inequitable access to assessments and services, based on location, digital ability and informal support.

The report provides independent confirmation of issues NATSIAACC has consistently advocated to address.

Inspector-General’s specific findings and endorsed responses

The Inspector-General concludes that “My Aged Care is not currently fit-for-purpose in enabling timely access to aged care services and supports for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.”

The report states that this inequity must be addressed urgently and in line with Closing the Gap Priority Reforms.

While acknowledging the value of the Elder Care Support workforce in providing “much-needed face-to-face support”, the IGAC notes that workforce limitations mean this approach “alone will not be enough to ensure that My Aged Care as a whole is able to provide a culturally safe, culturally appropriate, trauma-aware and healing-informed service.”

The Inspector-General “recognises and supports the recommendations proposed by the Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner”, including expanded face-to-face supports, in-person awareness campaigns, culturally appropriate resources, and redesign of access channels to “reduce or remove barriers to access.”

Governance Context:

While the Inspector-General of Aged Care and the Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner play critical oversight and advisory roles within the Aged Care system, NATSIAACC’s role as the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care is to represent the voice of Elders, Older People, Providers, families and communities, and to advocate for systemic reform informed by lived experience and community authority.

This paper reflects that complementary role by reviewing the Inspector-General’s findings through a community-controlled lens.

What this means for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Providers

The Inspector-General’s review reflects challenges that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Providers encounter when supporting Elders and Older People to access services through My Aged Care.

System barriers often result in Providers undertaking additional, unfunded roles related to navigation, communication, documentation, and advocacy. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled-led and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Providers frequently become trusted points of contact for Elders and Older People who are unable or unwilling to engage directly with My Aged Care.

This section is intended to support Providers to contextualise their experiences within a broader system framework, and use this resource to inform internal discussions, workforce awareness, and community engagement.

Connection to the Aged Care Act 2024

The Inspector-General's review examines My Aged Care in the context of the rights-based principles introduced under the Aged Care Act 2024, including dignity, equity, access, and respect for cultural identity.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, the findings raise important questions about whether current access pathways consistently uphold these principles in practice. System design feature such as digital reliance, complex processes and limited culturally safe engagement can unintentionally undermine the intent of the legislation.

This section supports Providers to understand how access and navigation challenges intersect with the objectives of the Aged Care Act 2024, and reinforces the importance of culturally appropriate, trauma-aware and accessible pathways.

Conclusion

NATSIAACC welcomes the Inspector-General's report and views it as an important opportunity to strengthen ongoing reform efforts. The findings provide further evidence to support action on issues already raised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their peak body, and underscore the need for sustained, accountable and culturally safe reform across the aged care system.

Enquiries:

For enquiries please contact info@natsiaacc.org.au

About NATSIAACC:

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council (NATSIAACC) is the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care. NATSIAACC works to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Older People can access support and care that is culturally safe, trauma-aware and healing informed, and recognises the importance of their personal connections to Community, Country and/or Island Home.