



NATSIAACC

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Ageing and Aged Care Council

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POSITIVE REFORM MUST ACT AS PRECEDENT FOR FIRST NATIONS AGED CARE RIGHTS

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council (NATSIAACC) welcomes the decision to remove the Aged Care co-charges for showers, dressing, and continence care from the 1st of October 2026, which was forcing some Older Australians to pay for basic services.

This announcement by the Australian Government and the Department of Health, Disability, and Ageing is an important step in correcting policy settings that were not working in practice in the *Aged Care Act 2024* and reflects increasing and justified scrutiny from across sector. This is not only the right decision for people, but also the right decision for the sustainability of the system – ensuring earlier access to care reduces pressure on more intensive and costly services later.

Importantly, this decision demonstrates that elements of the system design have not been working in practice, and that precedent must now be applied more broadly to ensure reform delivers in practice, not only in policy intent. As the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care, that same intent for reform must now extend to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Older People facing structural barriers to accessing safe, appropriate and timely care.

This requires system-level reform to address policy and funding settings that are not delivering equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. This requires immediate focus on: mandating access to culturally safe assessments from Community-Connected Assessors to ensure that assessments are grounded in trust and cultural authority; redesigning the unreasonable means testing of Stolen Generation redress repayments financially crippling Elders and Older People; and genuinely investing into community-controlled delivery to improve services on Country or Island Home.

When cultural safety is treated as an adjunct to clinical safety, Elders and Older People are failed by a system ignoring their cultural rights. There is no clinically safe care without cultural safety.

Kim Whiteley, NATSIAACC Chief Executive Officer, says that the decision is a step in the right direction.

“If the system can be fixed here, it must now be fixed where inequity is greatest – for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People experiencing the poorest health outcomes,” says Ms. Whiteley.

“The Government has an opportunity to extend reform to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Older People, who – without cultural safety embedded into the Aged Care system - are deteriorating in hospitals away from communities and Country and/or Island Home. Decisions ahead of the Budget will be critical in demonstrating this commitment to improving the outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Aged Care.”

NATSIAACC is ready to work in genuine partnership with the Australian Government to ensure that reform continues to be effective and improve Ageing and Aged Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Older People.

FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES: Sam Harding, samh@natsiaacc.org.au