



NATSIAACC

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Ageing and Aged Care Council

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ASSESSMENT SHAPES EVERY DECISION. CULTURAL SAFETY MUST SHAPE ASSESSMENT.

The Australian Government has recognised that human judgement matters by introducing a human review mechanism into the Integrated Assessment Tool (IAT), a decision the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council (NATSIAACC) welcomes.

Assessment determines every decision that follows in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elder or Older Person's Aged Care journey. It shapes funding, care planning and service delivery. If culture is not recognised during assessment, it is unlikely to be reflected throughout the person's Aged Care journey.

The introduction of human review is an important improvement, recognising that no assessment tool can fully capture the complexity of an individual's circumstances. However, meaningful reform requires cultural safety to be embedded within the assessment process itself.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Older People, culturally safe assessment means understanding more than clinical need. It should recognise connection to Country or Island Home, family and kinship responsibilities, cultural obligations, trusted decision-makers, language, community participation, grief, trauma, and whether services can respond in culturally safe ways.

NATSIAACC Chief Executive Officer, Kim Whiteley, said the Government's announcement was an important step, but the next stage of reform must ensure assessment reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of wellbeing from the outset.

"Assessment is where equity either begins or ends. If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Older People are assessed through a Western lens alone, the system cannot consistently understand what matters to them or deliver culturally safe and equitable care."

"The Government has recognised that human judgement matters, and we welcome that. But human judgement alone cannot compensate for an assessment that never recognised what mattered in the first place."

"The question isn't simply whether decisions can be reviewed. It's whether the assessment asks the right questions from the outset. That is how we build an assessment system that reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of wellbeing."

Human review is an important safeguard, but it cannot replace an assessment framework that consistently recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, culture and lived experience from the beginning.

As the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care, NATSIAACC will continue working alongside Government and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care ecosystem to strengthen culturally informed assessment and support implementation that delivers culturally safe, equitable outcomes for Elders and Older People.

When assessment recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of need from the outset, every decision that follows is better positioned to deliver culturally safe, equitable care.

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