



NATSIAACC

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Ageing and Aged Care Council

NATSIAACC, the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care, disappointed that calls for a stronger, genuinely independent Commissioner have not been supported

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, Older People and communities have been clear: a permanent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Commissioner must have the independence, authority and powers to hold the Aged Care system to account and drive meaningful change.

NATSIAACC is therefore disappointed that the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee has recommended that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Commissioner Bill be passed without the substantive strengthening called for through extensive First Nations consultation and advocated for by NATSIAACC.

The First Nations Ageing and Aged Care Peak strongly supports the establishment of a permanent Commissioner. But establishing the position alone is not enough. The legislation must establish a Commissioner with the independence, authority, powers and resources necessary to make a real difference for Elders and Older People.

NATSIAACC CEO Kim Whiteley said:

“We welcome the progress towards establishing a permanent Commissioner, but we are disappointed that this opportunity has not been taken to strengthen the Bill. The model currently before Parliament does not yet give full effect to the independent and authoritative Commissioner envisaged by the Royal Commission and reinforced through the extensive consultation undertaken by the Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner.

“Our Elders and Older People did not ask for a voice that can simply advise the system. They called for a Commissioner with the independence, powers and authority to challenge it, hold it accountable and drive lasting change. We urge the Parliament to address these shortcomings before the Bill is passed.”

NATSIAACC’s submission makes 15 recommendations to strengthen the Bill, including:

- Establishing the Commissioner as a genuinely independent statutory office holder, separate from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.
- Giving the Commissioner the functions and powers needed to drive systemic change, including the ability to make inquiries, investigate systemic issues, gather information, advocate publicly, make recommendations and publish reports independently.
- Protecting the Commissioner from Ministerial direction over their statutory functions and ensuring priorities are shaped through engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, Older People, communities and representative organisations.
- Establishing a dedicated office, secretariat and staffing arrangements.
- Embedding accountability to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including mechanisms that ensure the Commissioner maintains community trust and confidence.

NATSIAACC Acting Chair James Atkinson said:

“We have an opportunity to establish a permanent Commissioner that can make a lasting difference for generations to come. The Bill must do more to deliver the Commissioner envisaged by the Royal Commission and reinforced through the recommendations of Interim Commissioner Andrea Kelly and NATSIAACC’s Senate submission. Our Elders and Older People have made clear the need for a Commissioner with the independence, resources, and authority to challenge the system and bring genuine reform. Getting the foundations right now means creating a role that has the governance, community trust and strength to hold the Aged Care system to account.”

NATSIAACC will continue to advocate for a model that reflects the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and ensure the voices and experiences of Elders, Older People and providers inform the establishment and implementation of the permanent Commissioner and their Office.

Read NATSIAACC’s full submission and recommendations on our website: [NATSIAACC Submission – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Commissioner and Other Measures Bill 2026](#)