

# NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AGEING AND AGED CARE CONFERENCE

**AGEING OUR WAY THROUGH CULTURE, CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY**



PROGRAM  
2026



**NATSIAACC**

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Ageing and Aged Care Council

| TIME    | PROGRAM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| 8:00am  | Registration and Community Gathering                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 8:30am  | <b>Smoking Ceremony</b>   Walk through smoke to begin our 2-day conference.<br><br><i><b>Presented by:</b> Uncle Richie Allan, Ngunnawal Elder.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 9:00am  | <b>MC Welcome</b>   Welcome and Conference Framing.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 9:15am  | <b>Welcome to Country</b>   Welcome to Country performed by Ngunnawal Elder.<br><br><i><b>Presented by:</b> Aunty Violet Sheridan, Ngunnawal Elder.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 9:20am  | <b>Wiradjuri Echoes Performance</b>   Grounding delegates in culture and connection.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 9:35am  | <b>Chair Opening Address</b>   National leadership reflections and conference purpose.<br><br><i><b>Speaker:</b> James Atkinson, Acting NATSIAACC Chair, CEO, ACES.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 9:45am  | <b>CEO Address</b>   Positioning the conference as a national First Nations-led gathering.<br><br><i><b>Speaker:</b> Kim Whiteley, CEO, NATSIAACC.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 9:55am  | <b><u>Panel   What Communities Are Telling Us</u></b><br><br>Families, workforce and communities experience the Aged Care system from different perspectives. This conversation brings those voices together to share what Elders and Older People are experiencing when seeking and receiving care, and what those experiences tell us about where the system needs to listen and respond differently.<br><br><i><b>Facilitator:</b> Kim Whiteley, CEO, NATSIAACC.</i><br><i><b>Panellists:</b> Aunty Angela Brown, Elder, Yerrabi Yurwang; Lorice Douglas, Support Worker, Yaandina Community Services; Anna Malupo, Aged Care Worker, Mala'la; Tess Peters, Orange Aboriginal Medical Centre, Elder Care Support Worker.</i> |
| 10:25am | <b><u>Speaker   Personal Address</u></b>   Prerecorded Message<br><br>Hear directly from Natalie Siegel-Brown, former Inspector-General of Aged Care, as she shares her reflections and insights with the Ageing and Aged Care sector.<br><br><i><b>Speaker:</b> Natalie Siegel-Brown, former Inspector-General of Aged Care.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 10:30am | Morning Tea                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

| TIME    | PROGRAM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| 11:00am | <p><b><u>Panel   Reform to Reality: One Year into Change</u></b></p> <p>Across communities, people are still asking whether reform is making Aged Care easier, safer and more connected for Elders and Older People. This session brings reform back to its purpose: what has actually changed for Elders, Older People, families and communities, where expectations have not yet been met, and what must remain in focus as implementation continues.</p> <p><b>Facilitator:</b> Cassara Hardie, Director of Operations &amp; Company Secretary, NATSIAACC.<br/> <b>Panellists:</b> James Atkinson, CEO, Aboriginal Community Elder Services; Natasha McCormack, Deputy CEO, Purple House; Aunty Rachel Atkinson, CEO, Palm Island Community Company; Mishelle Brewer, Community Aged Care Manager, First Peoples' Health and Wellbeing.</p>                               |
| 11:40am | <p><b><u>Panel   Strength Through Culture and Community</u></b></p> <p>Care has always existed within family, community and culture. Through personal storytelling and reflection, this session celebrates the relationships, humour, cultural knowledge and community strength that support Elders and Older People to age well, reminding us that care is about much more than services alone.</p> <p><b>Facilitator:</b> Joshua Kelly, Strategic Reform &amp; Intelligence Officer, NATSIAACC.<br/> <b>Panellists:</b> Kate Smith, Research Lead, UWA Aboriginal Ageing Well Research Team; Tiffany McComsey, CEO, Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 12:05pm | <p><b><u>Panel   Ageing in Urban, Regional, Rural, Remote and Thin Market Communities</u></b></p> <p>Where Elders and Older People live shapes how Aged Care is accessed and delivered. Providers will share their experiences across urban, regional, rural and remote communities, the realities of delivering care in different settings, and the initiatives they have developed in response. The conversation will give delegates practical insight into how place, community and local conditions shape different approaches to care.</p> <p><b>Facilitator:</b> Ellen Finlay, Senior Policy &amp; Research Officer, Australian Association of Gerontology.<br/> <b>Panellists:</b> Matt Moore, Executive Director - Aged Care, Institute for Urban Indigenous Health; Rhonda Smith, Aboriginal Sector Support and Development Officer, Booroongen Djugun Limited.</p> |
| 12:30pm | Lunch                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

| TIME   | PROGRAM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| 1:30pm | <p><b><u>Panel   Navigating Care with Trust, Dignity and Advocacy</u></b></p> <p>For many Elders and Older People, the first challenge is knowing where to start. This session follows the experience of navigating assessment, My Aged Care, advocacy and support, examining where trust is built or lost and what a culturally safe pathway through the system should feel like from the perspective of an Elder or Older Person.</p> <p><b>Facilitator:</b> Kim Whiteley, CEO, NATSIAACC.</p> <p><b>Panellists:</b> Samantha Edmonds, Director of Policy, Education, and Systemic Advocacy, Older Persons Advocacy Network; Aunty Margret Campbell, Elder of the Dunghutti - Djirringanj Nations, Wyanga Aboriginal Elders Program; Marion Dwyer, Elder Care Program Senior Coordinator, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council.</p> |
| 2:10pm | <p><b><u>Speaker   Community-Led Solutions in Action</u></b></p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled organisations are designing care around the needs of their own communities. Through real examples, this session showcases solutions developed on the ground, the cultural and service responsibilities these organisations carry, and what their experience can teach the broader sector about designing care around community rather than expecting community to fit the system.</p> <p><b>Speaker:</b> Aaron Chambers, Executive Manager Positive Ageing &amp; Disability, Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 2:30pm | <p><b><u>Panel   Why This Work Matters: A Family's Journey Through Care</u></b></p> <p>Behind every policy, program and service is an Elder or Older Person, family and community experiencing its impact. Through personal storytelling, this session follows a family's journey through care and the moments that made a difference, positively or negatively, bringing the conversation back to what dignity, culture, connection and good care mean in people's lives.</p> <p><b>Facilitator:</b> Cassara Hardie, Director of Operations &amp; Company Secretary, NATSIAACC.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 3:00pm | Afternoon Tea and Melbourne Cup Gathering                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

## Theme: Truth, Reform and Community Realities

| TIME   | PROGRAM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| 3:30pm | <p><b><u>Panel   Workforce, Leadership and Sustainability</u></b></p> <p>We know the workforce pressures facing Aged Care. This conversation hears from organisations and leaders building the workforce differently. It will examine the cultural load carried by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, approaches to growing and retaining workforce, and how stronger First Nations leadership and career pathways can change the future of the sector.</p> <p><b>Facilitator:</b> Joshua Kelly, Strategic Reform &amp; Intelligence Officer, NATSIAACC.<br/> <b>Panellists:</b> Karl Briscoe, CEO, NAATSIHWP; Jed Fraser, Government Relations Lead, Indigenous Allied Health Australia; David Roberts, Director - Innovation and Training, Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council.</p>                                                                                          |
| 4:05pm | <p><b><u>Speaker   Knowledge into Practice: Supporting Community-Led Ageing and Aged Care</u></b></p> <p>Evidence has greatest value when communities can use it. This session demonstrates how research, knowledge and practical tools can be translated into better practice, giving delegates tangible examples of how evidence can strengthen and support culturally safe, community-led Ageing and Aged Care.</p> <p><b>Speaker:</b> Associate Professor Rebecca Bilton, Program and Research Director, Aged Care Research &amp; Industry Innovation Australia.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 4:25pm | <p><b><u>Panel   Truth-Telling and System Accountability</u></b></p> <p>Communities have raised many of the same concerns for years. This leadership conversation asks a harder question: when the evidence and community voices are clear, what prevents systems from changing? Senior system leaders will reflect on their responsibilities, where accountability sits and what must be different if reform is to translate into better outcomes for Elders and Older People.</p> <p><b>Facilitator:</b> Ellen Finlay, Senior Policy &amp; Research Officer, Australian Association of Gerontology.<br/> <b>Panellists:</b> Kim Whiteley, CEO, NATSIAACC; Gary Rake, Deputy Commissioner, Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission; Sonja Stewart, Deputy Secretary for Ageing and Aged Care, Department of Health, Disability and Ageing; Kate Pope PSM, Acting Inspector General of Aged Care.</p> |
| 5:10pm | <p><b><u>MC   Day One Reflections, Connection and Closing Gathering</u></b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 5:15pm | <p><b><u>Community Connection Gathering</u></b></p> <p>Delegates are invited to join us in connection, conversation and informal yarning at our social event.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

*Theme: Healing, Leadership and Future Generations*

| TIME    | PROGRAM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| 8:30am  | <b>Arrival and Morning Gathering</b>   On arrival, tea and coffee will be available.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 9:00am  | <b>Welcome</b>   Scene setting and Day 2 framing.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 9:05am  | <b>Acknowledgement of Country</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 9:10am  | <b>Aboriginal Cultural Immersions</b>   Opening cultural performance.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 9:25am  | <p><b><u>Panel   Community Control as Care: Honouring Our Past, Shaping Our Future</u></b></p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have always led their own solutions for caring for Elders and Older People. This conversation traces the strength and legacy of Community Control, what it makes possible for Elders and communities, and why the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care must be grounded in community leadership, self-determination and Community Controlled delivery.</p> <p><b>Facilitator:</b> Kim Whiteley, CEO, NATSIAACC.<br/> <b>Panellists:</b> LaVerne Belleair, CEO, Aboriginal Medical Service Redfern; Jodi Cassar PSM, Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner; Elsja Dewis, Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia.</p>                              |
| 10:10am | <p><b><u>Speaker   Culture, Dignity and Belonging</u></b></p> <p>Ageing well is about more than receiving services and supports. This reflection considers what it means to remain connected to identity, family, culture and community throughout the ageing journey, and why dignity and belonging must be understood as fundamental to good care rather than an addition to it.</p> <p><b>Speaker:</b> Aunty Jill Gallagher AO, CEO, VACCHO.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 10:30am | <b>Morning Tea</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 11:00am | <p><b><u>Panel   Healing, Memory, Culture and Care</u></b></p> <p>Trauma, racism, grief, loss and disconnection can continue to shape people's experiences as they age. This conversation brings together perspectives across healing, dementia, grief and palliative care to consider how culture, memory, family and community can remain sources of identity, strength and healing throughout changing care needs.</p> <p><b>Facilitator:</b> Cassara Hardie, Director of Operations &amp; Company Secretary, NATSIAACC.<br/> <b>Panellists:</b> Leonie Williamson, Acting CEO, the Healing Foundation; Merisa Holland, Facilitator/Reconciliation Action Plan Lead, Dementia Australia; Chelsea Menchin, National Projects and Operations Director, Palliative Care Australia; Uncle Richard Campbell, Stolen Generations Survivor.</p> |

*Theme: Healing, Leadership and Future Generations*

| TIME    | PROGRAM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| 11:40am | <p><b><u>Speaker   Conversation with Community Leadership</u></b>   Prerecorded Message</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Older People continue to carry culture, knowledge and leadership within communities. In this conversation, Minister McCarthy will reflect on the national priorities affecting Elders and Older People, the role of First Nations leadership in shaping government responses, and what stronger outcomes should look like for communities.</p> <p><b><i>Speaker:</i></b> Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy, Minister for Indigenous Australians.</p>                                 |
| 11:45am | <p><b>Ministerial Address</b>   Government Reflections on First Nations Ageing and Aged Care</p> <p><b><i>Speaker:</i></b> The Hon Sam Rae MP, Minister for Aged Care and Seniors.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 12:00pm | <p><b><u>Open Yarn   Healing, Care and Community</u></b></p> <p>Delegates are invited into the conversation to reflect on what they have heard throughout the morning, share their own knowledge and experience, and consider what the discussion means for the way care is designed and delivered in their own communities and organisations.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 12:30pm | Lunch                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 1:30pm  | <p><b><u>Panel   Elders Voices: What Does Ageing Our Way Mean?</u></b></p> <p>This session centres the voices of Elders and Older People as they share stories, reflections and hopes for the future. Through lived experience, truth-telling and cultural reflection, they will share what ageing our way means to them, what they value and expect from Aged Care, and what they want future generations to protect and carry forward through culture, connection, community, dignity and self-determination.</p> <p><b><i>Facilitator:</i></b> Joshua Kelly, Strategic Reform &amp; Intelligence Officer, NATSIAACC.</p>             |
| 2:20pm  | <p><b><u>Facilitated Yarn   Future Generations: Leadership, Workforce and Cultural Continuity</u></b></p> <p>The next generation will inherit responsibility for caring for Elders and carrying culture, knowledge and leadership forward. Through the voices of emerging leaders and workforce, this session explores what draws younger people into Ageing and Aged Care, what will keep them there and how intergenerational knowledge and cultural continuity can strengthen the future workforce.</p> <p><b><i>Facilitator:</i></b> Ellen Finlay, Senior Policy &amp; Research Officer, Australian Association of Gerontology.</p> |

*Theme: Healing, Leadership and Future Generations*

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| 2:50pm | <p><b><u>Speaker   Who Owns the Story? Data, Evidence and Accountability</u></b></p> <p>Data influences what governments see, what gets funded and how success is measured. This session asks whose knowledge counts, who controls the story told by the data, and whether current evidence reflects what Elders, Older People and communities say matters. It will challenge delegates to think differently about Indigenous Data Sovereignty, community ownership and how outcomes should be understood and measured.</p> <p><b><i>Speaker:</i></b> Dr. Terri Janke, Solicitor Director, Terri Janke and Company.</p>                                                                      |
| 3:10pm | Afternoon Tea                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 4:00pm | <p><b><u>Panel   Looking Forward: National Priorities and Collective Action</u></b></p> <p>Leaders will reflect on the priorities that require national attention, where First Nations leadership must be strengthened, and the responsibilities different parts of the system must carry to translate discussion into action.</p> <p><b><i>Facilitator:</i></b> Cassara Hardie, Director of Operations &amp; Company Secretary, NATSIAACC.<br/> <b><i>Panellists:</i></b> Kim Whiteley, CEO, NATSIAACC; James Atkinson, CEO, Aboriginal Community Elders Services; Kate Pope PSM, Acting Inspector General of Aged Care; Jodi Cassar PSM, Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner.</p> |
| 4:40pm | <p><b><u>Conference Closing Reflections and Shared Commitments Forward</u></b></p> <p>The Conference closes by bringing together the key reflections, priorities and challenges heard across the two days. These will inform NATSIAACC's post-conference Reflections Paper and ongoing national advocacy, carrying the voices and priorities shared at the Conference forward into the work that follows.</p> <p><b><i>Speaker:</i></b> MC</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 4:50pm | End of Proceedings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |



# NATSIAACC

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Ageing and Aged Care Council

## You can find more information at:



[www.natsiaacc.org.au](http://www.natsiaacc.org.au)



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