

**City of Port Adelaide Enfield**  
**Submission to the**  
**Australian Government Productivity Commission Inquiry into**  
**Caring for Older Australians**

City of Port Adelaide Enfield is a local government organisation and HACC service provider in the north-west to north-east of Adelaide metropolitan area. This area encompasses some of the most disadvantaged communities in the nation, along with a very diverse multicultural community.

1. **Funding formulas reflective of demographic need.** Funding formulas need to be mindful not only of the percentage of the population over the age of 65, but also the demographic make-up of that population. In South Australia we have a large number of the frail elderly - over 85s, whose needs, as a population group, in terms of home support services, hostels and nursing homes are considerably higher than those between 65 and 85. South Australia also has a higher number of elderly people from low socio-economic backgrounds. These people, unlike wealthy retirees, often have much poorer health, higher lifestyle risk factors and fewer resources to meet their health and support needs. Thirdly, the percentage of the elderly population for whom English is not a first language puts significant strain on services to try to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services and information. Many people as they grow older and particularly with the onset of dementia and cognitive decline, revert to their primary language.

2. **Interaction between disability support and aged support.** Clients report there are barriers and differentials of service provision between the two service systems which impact on people's ability to transition from disability to aged care services. Clients with known pre-existing disabilities are likely to have elevated service needs compared to the general population and if they have been stabilised through disability services, it is important that the change of funding stream does not disadvantage them. The transfer between these two sectors needs to be seamless and should not require the clients to navigate the system.

3. **Community-based service provision : Early Intervention.** Funding for community support services does not reflect either the current or the future need in the population. With the retirement of the baby-boomer generation, many of whom already have chronic diseases or risk factors, the demand on services will continue to escalate. As with other human services and health services, prevention and early intervention, is the most cost-effective way of providing effective services that contain costs for future generations. Provision of accessible community-based services is a cost-effective way of managing and delaying the demand on hostels and nursing-home beds, as well as medical services. While the rhetoric of early intervention and prevention is well-understood, the funding does not seem to follow, perhaps because in a time of rising demand and limited funding it is easy to make the short-sighted decision to fund those with the most acute immediate needs.

4. **Funding models.** While the consideration of "fund-holding" type of model (where the client holds the funding and decides how it is best utilised) offers some benefits in terms of appropriateness and acceptability of services to the client, there are a number of dangers inherent in this model.

If the service provision is open to family members or non-professional carers, there is potential for abuse and exploitation. There are also issues about how appropriate skill and service delivery would be monitored, and how administrative / workplace functions such as Workcover, OHS standards, pay rates etc would be overseen.

There are a number of smaller NGOs who provide an excellent service to clients. The fund-holder model means that they will be unable to predict their income and hence unable to budget and plan their business appropriately. The current model whereby service-providers are allocated a certain amount of funding but are required to comply with certain accreditation standards and have the flexibility to respond according to demands, while not perfect, does provide a business model for agencies, job certainty and a career path for people working in the aged-care service industry.

5. **Aged Care Service Provision as a Career Path.** It is widely recognised that human service provision, be-it childcare or aged care is an undervalued and underpaid career path. This comes with the usual range of skill-issues: higher skilled workers tend to move out of the sector into better paid jobs, leaving workers who may have low skills to provide the services. Given the current shortage of quality aged care workers, the increasing demand for services, and the increasing complexity of frail elderly clients with often multiple chronic diseases, the current workforce shortage can be predicted to rise significantly over the next few years.

Inherent in any pay-rise that adequately recognises the effort and skills of workers, is the need for funding to match this additional salary cost for organisations. It would not be adequate or appropriate for the current aged care dollars to fund fewer better quality services in an era of rising population need.

6. **Advocacy Services.** Council would like to reiterate the importance of advocacy services being available to frail elderly clients and that barriers to access for these services such as language, cost, distance, awareness (promotion) be addressed to ensure that clients have options available to them to address any issues that might arise as the result of services, lack of services, or changes in services.

7. **Navigating the System.** People lead complex lives and have multiple needs that need to be met in order to live fulfilling, safe and productive lives in the community. Unfortunately for service providers and funders, a one-size-fits-all approach will not meet the needs of the various clients we encounter in the community. Many of the services required by clients (income security, safe appropriate housing, accessible health services, safe accessible transport, various home assist type services, social activities etc) are provided by different providers and funded through different government agencies. It is important for effective service provision and in order to produce the desired outcomes, that this mix of services is easily navigated AND that assistance is available for clients to

navigate the system. Otherwise those most at need, whom will be unable to work through the system, will "fall through the gaps".

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