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Mike Woods  
Deputy Chairman  
Australian Government Productivity Commission

## Response to *Caring for Older Australians* Draft Report

Dear Mr Woods,

Anglicare Australia is most interested in understanding how any changes to the way Australian society cares for its older members would affect those most vulnerable and marginalised in our community.

The Productivity Commission's draft report responds to stakeholder calls for a more flexible, individually responsive, and accessible system.

Anglicare Australia sees the final report as an opportunity for the Commission to more adequately address the complex needs of the most vulnerable members of our society and also champion the broader social changes that are needed to match its proposed new aged care system.

We thank the Commission for the opportunity to appear before it at a public hearing on April 6, and to make a detailed written response to the draft report, which we will present at that time.

The following is a brief summary of the key points we will make in that submission and hope to expand upon at the hearing.

### **The most vulnerable and marginalised members of our community**

The most vulnerable and marginalised members of our community are not always easy to deal with, require more in the way of services and support, and need particular consideration when it comes to care and community connection.

Ensuring high quality care and support in this setting needs innovative services that are purposive, that are connected to or a part of their communities, and that are by their nature linked in to a range of health and community services. While accurately

costing the complex care and support that is needed is essential, it is not in itself an adequate assurance of quality or purpose.

Not for Profit organisations are shaped by their objects, rather than their fiduciary duty to shareholders or other owners. In that context, while not a guarantee in itself of delivering the appropriate high quality, efficient and effective care and services we would look for, NFP providers can be held to account against those goals, or objects.

Anglicare Australia would like to see innovative programs involving people with special needs developed in partnership with NFP provider and government, with block funding one of the options to ensure sustainability of that provision over the medium to long term.

### **An age friendly, inclusive society**

For a new aged care system to support the independence of older people and their continuing contribution to Australian society, and that of their families and carers, the development and provision of housing, community services, infrastructure, employment and other cultural activity needs to be both age friendly and inclusive.

The Commission's draft report does not make strong recommendations to government for future development in these areas, nor does it adequately articulate those goals for the Seniors' Gateway Agency or the Regulatory Commission proposed in the report.

### **Workforce development**

Wage rates are too low across the sector to attract and retain staff into the future, and the Commission could reach beyond the notion of competitive wages to call for action on that front in its final recommendations.

More complex is the challenge of the changing shape of care work across sectors - particularly in community care and in regional and rural Australia. A workforce development project which drew in services, consumers and workers from aged, disability, alcohol and other drugs, and mental health sectors could start to explore a more effective, inclusive and sustainable approach to funding and delivering high quality accessible care.

### **Accreditation and quality assurance**

A restricted monopoly accreditation agency and a best practice systems approach to quality assurance sets a floor for acceptable service quality but doesn't encourage diversity or innovation in the provision of care and services, nor hold them accountable against outcomes for consumers.

### **Transition and oversight**

It is not clear that the risks to small effective organisations are given sufficient weight. Locally connected, or culturally specific, NFP providers play a valuable role in meeting special needs and, through innovation, in responding creatively to local circumstance and emerging need. The proposed scheme's deregulation of supply and the shift towards consumer directed care will potentially favour large providers, at least in the short term. Some consideration of "industry adjustment" assistance particularly for small providers is needed.

The proposed transition taskforce should establish a Diverse and Special Needs Reference Group to monitor the impact of the changes on the most vulnerable members of society.

We look forward to appearing before you next week, and to the Commission's final report in June.

Yours sincerely

Kasy Chambers  
*Executive Director*