

SUBMISSION TO PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION CARING FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS

KIMBERLEY AGED AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Kimberley Aged and Community Services (KACS) sits under the Western Australian Country Health Service (WACHS) but is primarily funded by the Commonwealth (but with some shared arrangements) to provide aged and community services to clients, predominantly Aboriginal and living in remote communities (Remote HACC, CACP and EACH). It does also provide services to towns across the Kimberley – Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Wyndham when required and in particular through the Aged Care Assessment Program and National Carers Respite Program.

As with all major changes the needs of the majority are taken into consideration with often those marginalised in society then needing to fit into guidelines which do not best reflect their own needs or circumstances.

Older Aboriginal people in remote communities have complex needs in challenging conditions. Their connection to country makes moving from their land for care as they age untenable. Basic services in communities such as housing, water and sewerage are often fragile. Access to telecommunications is limited with most Aboriginal people in remote communities not having access to a telephone. Access to a healthy diet is compromised by the high cost of providing fresh fruit and vegetables to communities. Community politics, family expectations, access to services, isolation, harsh weather conditions and chronic health conditions all contribute to their physical, mental and spiritual health being very compromised and well below the average Australian.

This submission is to raise awareness to the decision makers that providing services to older Aboriginal people in remote communities has absolutely no comparison to providing aged and community services to middle class Australia. Service providers require flexibility. A care system is needed that can use the limited resources available to their absolute optimum in providing the necessary support required to these very important older Australians, without the incumbence of inflexibility in funding guidelines. Please take into consideration the needs of remote, rural and isolated Aboriginal Australians when formulating your change agenda.

Julie Johnston
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