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Caring for Older Australians  
Productivity Commission  
GPO Box 1428  
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Sir/Madam

### **PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT *CARING FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS***

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission regarding the Productivity Commission Draft Report *Caring for Older Australians*.

Golden Plains Shire Council has provided input and supports the submission made to the Productivity Commission on behalf of local government by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV). Golden Plains Shire is a small rural shire experiencing significant growth. Between 2006 and 2021, the population of people 65+ is expected to increase by 113.1%, and make up 14.1% of the population. (Golden Plains Shire website). However, the shire lacks a range of services that would support these older residents in their own homes. Residents are able to access trusted HACC services provided by Golden Plains Shire, and district nursing services on an outreach basis from agencies which are not based within the shire. Residents must travel to the regional centres of Geelong or Ballarat to utilise many other support services. Needless to say, access to transport remains an issue for many residents.

The implementation of all of the recommendations of the Draft Productivity Commission Report without amendment may have far reaching effects on the Golden Plains community, and other small rural communities. We request that the Commission take into account the MAV submission together with the following matters:

#### ***Employment***

HACC staff usually work part time, and are usually women. Opening the provision of HACC type services to the market may mean that local government can no longer provide services and must make all HACC positions redundant. Redundancy costs for small rural shires will be significant. The possible proliferation of a range of competitive small providers means that workers may need to work for a range of providers to make up their former hours of employment.

#### ***Assessment***

The proposed phone assessments are not adequate in rural areas. Part of the assessment role relates to assisting a frail person to set goals and priorities, and to access health and wellbeing services. This requires comprehensive local knowledge. If frail, elderly people are unsure about who they are contacting for a service, they may delay seeking assistance. This would be at their detriment, resulting in admission to residential care with attendant high funding costs.

#### ***'Cherry Picking' clients***

The report proposes that consumers may choose from the range of competing service providers in the market place. However, service providers may choose whether or not they provide a service to the particular consumer. Consumers who may 'cost' more by virtue of having complex care needs or significant travel distances may not receive a service at all.

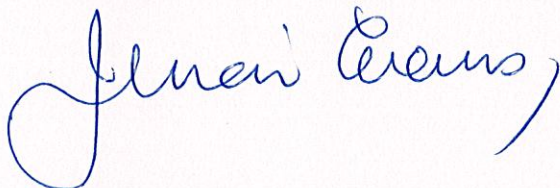
***Advocacy & Planning***

Local government, particularly in rural areas plays a very strong role in planning and advocacy. This may be in order to reduce identified service gaps, or on behalf of various populations linking vulnerable consumers to a range of support and restorative services within their local community. This matter has not been addressed.

***People with Disabilities who are HACC clients***

There is no mention in the report of what will happen to people with disabilities who currently receive HACC services (mainly respite care). These people may be directed to the disability service sector, which already cannot cope with demand. In Grampians region, there are 220 people on the Disability Support Register with no new Individual Support Packages having been approved for four months. The Productivity Commission proposal will exacerbate the situation.

Yours faithfully



**JILLIAN EVANS**  
**DIRECTOR COMMUNITY SERVICES**