

2024 Progress Report

Implementation of the Recommendations of the
Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and
Safety

Easy Read Summary



About this summary

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (which we also call 'the Royal Commission') was established in 2018.

The Royal Commission was formed to investigate whether older people who live in an aged care home (often called a 'nursing home'), or who get help to continue living in their own homes, are safe and well looked after.

These people receive what is called 'aged care'.

In doing its investigation, the Royal Commission spoke to government, many experts, people who receive aged care, people who provide aged care, and other members of the public.

After that, it made 148 recommendations to the government.

Recommendations are advice on what should change to make things better.

The Inspector-General of Aged Care has to tell parliament what the government is doing about each recommendation, and has written a report about it.

This is an easy-to-read summary of that report.

You can ask for help to read this summary.

A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.

Observations

The Inspector-General thinks the government can do things better. He wants the government to do a number of things the Royal Commission said they should:

- make it easier for people to get and use aged care (this is called ‘access’)
- make aged care even more suitable for people’s needs
- help people understand age care better
- make sure people get the best possible care
- make aged care good for everyone, even though we are all different
- make sure people in aged care have access to a doctor, dentist and other health services.

Key messages in the report

Access and navigability

Access to care depends on how the aged care system is set up.

Right now, not everyone who needs care can get it when they need it.

The Royal Commission said we need a big change.

It recommended setting up a new aged care program where everyone who needs care has the right to receive it when they need it, and get what they need wherever they are.

Making this change would benefit a lot of people. It is not currently happening.

The Inspector-General is asking the government to make these important changes.

The new program would ensure that people get the help they need when they need it and prevent them from having to wait a long time to get the care they need, and make sure they get all the services they need.

Improving information

Older Australians find it hard to know where to start when looking for aged care.

The starting point – the government’s ‘My Aged Care’ system – is not easy to use or to understand.

Before people can access aged care, they need an ‘assessment’. This is a process where someone’s care needs are identified.

Some people have to wait a long time for their assessment. Once they receive an assessment, they might also have to continue to wait for care. This can cause problems if they get sick or injured, or less able to look after themselves while they are waiting.

The Inspector-General wants the process to be faster and for people to get more face-to-face support when they are looking for aged care.

Ensuring an appropriate and secure workforce

There aren’t enough workers in aged care.

This has been a problem for a long time.

Changes have been happening slowly since the Royal Commission made its recommendations.

The Inspector-General knows making changes can be hard and wants all levels of government to keep working together to make things happen faster.

Improving access to health care and allied health care

The way health care and aged care work together still needs more work.

Not much has been done about this yet.

The Inspector-General has heard that older people living in aged care homes might not get enough visits from a doctor or other medical help.

They also might not get to see a dentist, physio, occupational therapist or a podiatrist – people that could help them live better.

The way the government provides money for aged care does not always cover these additional (allied health) services.

Improving access to respite care

Some older people are cared for by their partner or their family.

Sometimes their carers need a break.

This can mean the older person needs to get ‘respite care’.

Respite care is short-term care that can be provided in an older person’s home or in an aged care home.

The Inspector-General is worried that there are not enough respite places available, and often not the right type of respite (like in your home).

The government may not be paying enough money to aged care services to make them want to provide respite care.

Services may also not have enough staff to offer respite care.

Improving dementia support

The Inspector-General understands that people with dementia and their carers have complex needs.

Changes have started to make it easier for people with dementia to get care and support.

But more needs to be done.

There must be enough services and ways for people with dementia to get help.

More people also need to be told about these services.

Everyone who works in aged care should have training on how to help people with dementia.

Supporting First Nations Australians in aged care

Aged care programs should be respectful of First Nations peoples.

They should also understand trauma and support healing.

‘Trauma’ is when a difficult experience causes a person to feel very upset or stressed.

‘Healing’ means getting better after being hurt physically or emotionally.

It is a process where someone starts to feel stronger and happier again.

More changes are needed to make sure the aged care system works well for First Nations people, especially those who have experienced trauma.

Designing for diversity in aged care

The government is trying to make aged care better for people from different – or diverse – backgrounds.

‘Diverse’ is a word that means people are different.

The government has made some changes to the aged care system to provide better care for more diverse people.

Some older people from diverse backgrounds – including LGBTQI adults and people with disability – have been getting better care because of this.

The Inspector-General thinks the aged care system should be redesigned to always respect everyone’s differences.

Improving access in regional, rural and remote communities

The Inspector-General wants the government to think about how many aged care services there are for people who live far away from cities.

These places are called ‘regional, rural and remote’ areas.

The Inspector-General also wants the government to think about whether it is paying enough money to these services to ensure they can continue to provide good quality care.

Things the Inspector-General thinks the government should focus on until the end of 2024

Think again about how care is given

The government should look at the Royal Commission's suggestions for ways to create a new, fairer system.

It should help people everywhere based on their needs.

Finish creating the new Act and Rules

The government needs to finalise the new Act and Rules as soon as possible.

Provide more money for home care

If the government doesn't want to change to a new system, it should provide more money to services that care for people in their own homes.

Communicate more with people working in the sector

The government should talk to people sooner when it plans to change things.

Fix things that cause problems

The government needs to look at whether all the changes it is making work well together and don't cause problems.

Check whether there is enough money for regional aged care homes

The government should make sure regional aged care homes have enough money to continue to provide services.

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