



MINISTER FOR HEALTH

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Ms Apolline Kohen
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The Senate
Standing Committee on Community Affairs

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Dear Standing Committee

Thank you for your correspondence date 11 November 2025 to the Hon Lia Finocchiaro MLA, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory regarding the Standing Committee on Community Affairs' Senate inquiry into the transition from the Commonwealth Home Support Program to the Support at Home Program and inquiry into the Support at Home Program. I am responding on the Chief Minister's behalf.

The Northern Territory Government values the progress the Australian Government is making on implementing aged care reforms to build a more responsive, safer and fairer aged care system for all older Australians. We also believe it is important that these reforms consider the views and experiences of consumers and stakeholders and therefore welcome the opportunity to provide our insights to delivering aged care programs in the Northern Territory.

Please find attached the Northern Territory Government's submission to the Senate inquiry into the transition from the Commonwealth Home Support Program to the Support at Home Program for consideration.

Yours sincerely

STEVE EDGINGTON

- 9 JAN 2026



NT Government Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Transition of the Commonwealth Home Support Program to the Support at Home Program

The Northern Territory (NT) Government provides the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) across regional and remote NT. The program is valued as an important mechanism to supporting older Territorians to remain in their homes and communities; reducing the risk of being taken off country, away from family; and experiencing ongoing hospitalisation. The following comments are provided in response to the terms of reference for submissions into the Senate Inquiry issued by the Standing Committee on Community Affairs.

a) Timeline for the transition of CHSP to Support at Home after 1 July 2027

The NT Government acknowledges the timeline to transition the program from CHSP to Support at Home.

The NT aged care system is still adjusting to recent reforms, and it will take time for any issues or unintended consequences to emerge. The NT Government recognises the need for the aged care market to stabilise and for the full impact of the transition to Support at Home to be understood and addressed over time.

b) Expected impact of the transition

(i) Waiting periods for assessment and receipt of care

The NT Government supports an approach where waiting periods are as short as possible, and early intervention is enabled through timely access to services and programs for older Territorians, primarily Aboriginal people living in remote communities. This support is particularly important to enable safe discharge from hospital and to provide short-term assistance during crisis situations. Delays at this level can result in functional decline, increased carer burden, and avoidable long stays in hospital.

In the NT, the use of emergency CHSP funding, without waiting for assessment outcomes, is used extensively to support timely hospital discharge and to provide essential services. In remote NT communities, it is imperative that entry level services supporting basic needs, such as meals, medication support and laundry, can be initiated without delay or formal assessment, as currently occurs under emergency CHSP arrangements. Older people in remote and very remote communities are highly vulnerable, and these prompt services are critical to maintaining basic health and safety.

The Support at Home Program is critical for early intervention that supports people to age safely in place. Waiting periods for assessment and receipt of care will create longer term impacts for older people and increase the likelihood of hospitalisation and the need for long term care.

(ii) Lifetime cap on home modifications

The NT Government does not support a lifetime cap on home modifications. A lifetime cap risks limiting access to appropriate supports over time, particularly for people with progressive conditions or complex needs and where there may be greater wear and tear due to environmental factors.

The NT has experienced an increase in demand for assistive technology and home modifications, placing pressure on the NT Health equipment loans program, which often acts as a provider of last resort when there are market gaps or service delivery limitations.

There is a significant risk that introducing lifetime caps may increase pressure on hospitals and the need to access residential care services, as it does not support older people to age at home over time.

NT Government Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Transition of the Commonwealth Home
Support Program to the Support at Home Program

(iii) End-of-Life Pathway time limits

The NT Government does not support end-of-life pathway time limits.

In the NT, end-of-life pathway programs are impacted by workforce shortages, long travel distances, limited infrastructure and complex social circumstances, particularly in rural and remote areas. These factors can make it difficult to deliver end-of-life services within a rigid timeline.

The NT Government encourages end-of-life pathways that have greater flexibility. This will help ensure end-of-life care remains person-centred and responsive to individual circumstances, which may extend beyond three months.

(iv) Thin markets and provider concentration

The proposed single provider model under Support at Home presents challenges for many CHSP providers in the NT, particularly smaller organisations. Many providers do not have the capacity to rapidly expand their service scope, workforce or governance arrangements to incorporate all aspects of the revised Support at Home program model.

Markets are very thin in rural and remote areas of the NT and additional pressure on providers creates a high risk of services withdrawing from the provision of care for older Territorians in what is already a complex and challenging environmental landscape.

c) Aged care provider readiness, including workforce

Provider readiness for the transition varies significantly across the NT. Workforce shortages remain a major constraint, particularly in regional, remote, and very remote areas.

The NT Government proposes that interim arrangements, including programs similar to the emergency CHSP supports, will be essential during the early stages of implementation to maintain continuity of care for vulnerable clients.

d) Other related matters

The NT Government holds concerns that the loss of CHSP funding for specialist services, including memory, vision and continence, will create significant gaps in care for older people in the NT. In many rural and remote locations, there are no alternative service options available for older people.

The NT Government suggests that it is essential for delegates to have the flexibility to override Aged Care Assessment Service outcomes in defined circumstances. This allows for a person-centred approach to aged care assessment, where skilled delegates with local system knowledge and risk management expertise can further assess client needs within their environment. This is particularly important in remote, complex service environments where assessment outcomes may not accurately reflect individual needs or practical service realities.