

# **PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Department of Health and Aged Care**

**Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Legislation Committee**

**Inquiry into the Aged Care Bill 2024 (Provisions)**

**3 October 2024**

**PDR Number: IQ24-000158**

**Support service delivery in rural and remote Australia**

**Written**

**Senator:** Marielle Smith

**Question:**

How does the Bill support service delivery in rural and remote Australia

**Answer:**

The Aged Care Bill 2024 (the Bill) supports the ongoing delivery of Commonwealth-funded aged care services in rural and remote Australia.

The Bill recognises that older people should be able to access quality and (culturally) safe care wherever they live, including in rural and remote Australia. This is reflected in the Bill in its Objects, the Statement of Rights and the Statement of Principles. Importantly for rural and remote Australia, the Statement of Principles also recognises the need for the aged care system to build the capacity of registered providers and community connections to support service continuity, and access to integrated services.

Consistent with the recommendations of the Aged Care Taskforce, the new Aged Care Act (the new Act) will enable existing flexible funding arrangements for the provision of funded aged care services to individuals in rural and remote Australia to continue. This includes:

- block-funding for specialist aged care programs in thin markets (i.e. the Multi-Purpose Services Program (MPSP) and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care (NATSIFACP)), and
- additional, or varied, funding arrangements for services delivered through mainstream aged care programs in these areas.

These arrangements will be continue to be complemented by grant funded initiatives aimed at improving access to services for older people living in regional, rural and remote Australia. This includes funding for workforce, professional and viability supports for rural and remote providers, as well as additional infrastructure funding to support the construction, upgrade and expansion of aged care services in these areas.

The Department of Health and Aged Care will also continue to explore innovative, cross-sectoral approaches to addressing entrenched delivery issues in thin markets (for example, via our Integrated Care Commissioning initiative and our Care Together program). This is supported by section 157 of the Bill and related Rules, which will provide exemptions from membership of governing bodies obligations for providers that are co-operatives (as well as for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations) in certain circumstances. This will help encourage the growth of care sector co-operatives, which can contribute to improved access to services in thin markets.