

## Submission to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

31<sup>st</sup> July 2020

Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety  
GPO Box 1151  
Adelaide SA 5001

By email: [ACRCenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au](mailto:ACRCenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au)

Dear Commissioners

The Consumer Policy Research Centre (CPRC) welcomes the opportunity to provide a further submission to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (ACRC) regarding our additional consumer research.

CPRC is an independent, not-for-profit consumer research organisation. Our mission is to protect and improve the experiences and welfare of consumers, by producing evidence-based research that drives policy and practice change. We conduct research across a range of consumer markets, with a focus on consumer decision-making, consumer data and the online marketplace. We also consider the outcomes of vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers participating in markets.

As part of this submission, please find attached the research report *Empowering older people in accessing aged care services in a consumer market* authored by Prof. Irene Blackberry, Dr Clare Wilding, and Dr Marita Chisholm of La Trobe University – funded through CPRC’s Research Pathways program. This research provides qualitative evidence about the experiences of rurally located older Victorians seeking to access both Home Care Packages and Commonwealth Home Support, and the barriers they face. The researchers adopted a modified DELPHI methodology to identify priority issues for rurally located older people.

The research found that:

- The Home Care markets in rural areas are exceedingly “thin”, often only basic services are available in the area and there may only be one service provider available – if at all. Some interviewees even had to travel to another town to receive services, but this often is complicated by managing appointments around a limited transport schedule. Absent a genuine “choice” of providers and services, the Consumer Directed Care model may not be appropriate or feasible for rural and regional Australia, especially beyond large regional cities.
- Even when choice is available, older people found comparison of different providers difficult, with no like for like information available. Interviewees also had difficulty understanding what services will or will not be delivered, and the costs associated.
- The research also identified “reluctant demand” for aged care services. In well-functioning consumer markets, individuals actively make choices about preferred goods and services they want. By comparison, the research about the in-home care market finds evidence that individuals tend to engage when they are in crisis or after

hospitalisation. Otherwise they need to be persuaded by health professionals to get an assessment for support.

- There is low awareness of aged care services available in rural communities, and rural older people tend to rely on health professionals, friends and family for advice about supports and services available. The research found some health care staff even lack knowledge about aged care services.

We also attach CPRC's recently published report *The experiences of older consumers: towards markets that work for people* (July 2020). This report draws on the attached La Trobe research and our previously submitted report *Choosing care: the difficulties in navigating the Home Care Package market* (January 2020), as well as the broader literature around decision-making in complex and essential services. We identified four key experiences common across major consumer markets:

- 1. The “marketplace” is often limited or inaccessible**
- 2. The design of products and services, and even market design, can be unfair**
- 3. Limited consideration is given to real world decision-making**
- 4. Little thought is given to consumers' motivation to engage in a market, and their varying engagement styles and capacities**

We then outline a *Hierarchy of Stewardship Priorities* to ensure markets work for people. In order of priority we suggest market stewards:

- 1. Create accessible, functional and sustainable marketplaces**
- 2. Adopt an inclusive design approach**
- 3. Engage in comprehension testing and product simplification**
- 4. Consider appropriate choice architecture, assisted choice, and default options**

If you have any queries about this submission and the attached reports, please contact Ben Martin Hobbs, Senior Research and Policy Manager at [ben.martinhobbs@cprc.org.au](mailto:ben.martinhobbs@cprc.org.au).

Yours sincerely



Lauren Solomon  
Chief Executive Officer  
**Consumer Policy Research Centre**