

# Seniors Peak Body Consumers Reference Group Tuesday, 3 February 2026

## Meeting Communique

**Members Present:** Amina Schipp (Chair), Frank Smith, Margaret Walsh, Stephen Kobelke, Micheal Pemberton, Renate Van Dordrecht, Ron DeGruchy, Suresh Rajan and Lenka Psar-McCabe

**Also in Attendance:** Bianca Marson Whait (Seniors Peak Body Manager, Advocare) and Mark Kinsela (Secretariat, COTA WA).

### Opening Remarks

The Seniors Peak Body Consumers Reference Group met on 3 February 2026 at Perron Place, Victoria Park. The new Chair welcomed members and reiterated the purpose of the group as an independent voice ensuring that the lived experience of older people informs decision making across government, community services and the broader public policy environment in Western Australia.

### Deferred Group Discussion: Age Friendly Communities Framework

Members continued their discussion using the WHO Age Friendly Communities Framework, focusing on the domains relevant to civic participation, employment and housing. The conversation centred on the practical barriers older people face in planning for their futures and remaining active contributors to their communities.

### Housing and Participation

Members raised a range of issues affecting older Western Australians, including:

- barriers to downsizing including stamp duty settings, limited supply of suitable accessible housing and a lack of early planning support
- financing challenges, including limited access to bridging loans for retirees
- the need for flexible models of housing and care, including carers living with older people and adaptable home designs
- the importance of encouraging older people to record their wishes early, including preferred living arrangements and future care needs
- the need for culturally safe and language specific supports, especially for people with dementia who may revert to their first language
- the opportunity for creative public education to encourage proactive planning, including potential public awareness initiatives
- Members noted the important role of superannuation funds in supporting people at key life stages, assisting them to make informed decisions well before crises occur.

### Local Government Rates and Cost of Living

Members discussed the capped Seniors Rates Concession, which has been unchanged since 2017, despite housing prices and local government land taxes increasing significantly in the same period. Members discussed how rising property cost have reduced its effectiveness and expressed interest in advocating for indexation or reform.

## **Health Services and Community Supports**

Members discussed the accessibility and quality of health and aged care services across WA. Key themes included:

- the need for clear, plain English information on what services are available and how to access them
- challenges faced by older people in regional communities where health and aged care options remain limited
- the importance of culturally informed care and appropriate communication, particularly for CALD communities
- concerns regarding Commonwealth aged care reforms, especially changes to medication management and access to dose administration aids
- the need for stronger focus on preventive health, vaccinations, oral health and screening
- the importance of a single, trusted point of information for older adult health services, immunisations, screening and wellbeing programs
- the need to strengthen dementia capable practice across health professions, alongside support for families to identify high quality providers
- the opportunity to harmonise Enduring Power of Attorney legislation nationally to support clarity and consistency
- Members highlighted that ageism often begins with uncertainty, fear or lack of information and emphasised the importance of reliable and accessible communication.

## **Elder Rights and Access to Legal Support**

Members expressed significant concern regarding the limited legal support available to older people in Western Australia. Issues included:

- the absence of dedicated elder law services outside Legal Aid
- gaps in regional access to legal assistance
- vulnerability of older people entering aged care contracts without independent advice
- limitations in WA's elder abuse legislation, including the inability for third parties to report concerns and the absence of mandatory reporting

The group expressed interest in recommending the establishment of a dedicated independent Elder Law organisation to address these gaps.

## **Other Business**

### **Older Adult Hubs**

An overview of the Older Adult Hubs model was provided. Members responded positively to the concept and emphasised the importance of clear navigation, strong links to existing services and cross agency coordination. Members noted that the hubs must support, rather than duplicate, what already exists.

### **ABC Hospital Discharge Story**

Advocare advised that the ABC is preparing a story on older people who cannot be discharged from hospital due to unavailable supports. Members were invited to contact Advocare if they know someone who may wish to participate.

## **Health Advocacy**

Members discussed the importance of dedicated health advocates in hospitals, especially for CALD communities and older people experiencing cognitive decline. A proposal by Suresh Rajan for statewide advocates was noted, supporting both systemic and individual advocacy.