

Seniors Peak Body Consumers Reference Group
Friday, 24 July 2026

Meeting Communique

Members Present: Amina Schipp (Chair), Ron de Gruchy, Frank Smith, Lenka Psar-McCabe, Margaret Walsh, Stephen Kobelke, Michelle Treasure, Linda Bolton (Secretary), Michael Pemberton and Bobbie Kidd.

Apologies: Suresh Rajan

Also in Attendance: Dr Barbara Buzzard

Opening Remarks and Seniors Peak Update

The Seniors Peak Body Consumers Reference Group met on 24 July 2026. The Chair welcomed group members, and the CEO of Advocare and new Secretary to their first committee meeting.

Seniors Peak Update

The CEO provided an update on Seniors Peak Body activities from May to July and advised that, following the resignation of Seniors Peak Manager Bianca Marson Whit, she would lead the work of the Peak Body with support from new Seniors Peak Engagement Officer Leanne Bodley. The CEO confirmed that the Memorandum of Understanding between Advocare and COTA WA regarding the secretariat function had concluded and welcomed Linda Bolton as Volunteer Secretary. The CEO thanked Bianca Marson Whit and Mark Kinsella from COTA WA for their significant contributions to the WA Seniors Peak Body.

The CEO noted recent meetings with several Consumer Reference Group members to gain insight into the group's work and priorities. She emphasised the importance of raising the profile of CRG members and drawing on the group's knowledge and experience to influence positive reforms for older Western Australians. New members from the National Older Persons Reference Group and Council of the Ageing were welcomed, with members noting opportunities for collaboration between state and federal representative groups.

Housing

Housing continues as a major focus, with members emphasising the need for safe, appropriate and accessible housing for older Western Australians. Members discussed the importance of liveable housing design in new builds, including accessible entry points for people using wheelchairs, walkers and other mobility supports.

CEO noted work with Shelter WA, People with Disability WA and the Summer Foundation campaigning for adoption of minimum housing design standards for new builds to ensure older people, and people with disability have access to more safe and accessible housing. Initial meeting with Minister Buti (Commerce) to discuss standards with follow up meetings with Seniors and Ageing and Housing Ministers to gain support for adoption of Liveable Housing Design Standards.

Pillar One: Thriving Physically, Mentally and Spiritually

Carers Strategy

Members discussed recent consultation on the State Government's Carers Strategy. Concerns were raised about the consultation process, including limited opportunities for meaningful input and insufficient focus on what currently works for carers. Members highlighted the difficulty many carers experience in locating appropriate help, respite and emergency support, even where funding is available.

Members noted feedback from Carers WA discussions and agreed that unpaid carers provide essential support across Australia. The group emphasised the need for practical, accessible and timely support, particularly when carers require immediate assistance or respite.

It was noted there is an urgent need for support and emergency funding for carers who require immediate assistance, however when the crunch comes carers often find there is no support or respite available.

Stamp Duty Concessions for Older People

Members discussed ongoing advocacy for stamp duty concessions for older people, particularly those with a Pensioner Concession Card or Commonwealth Seniors Health Card who wish to right-size into more suitable accommodation.

Members agreed that the Peak Body should continue policy advocacy with government to support stamp duty concessions for older people seeking to right-size into more suitable accommodation.

The Members also discussed concerns that current caps on local government council rates and water rates had not been reviewed in 10 years and had not kept pace with rising cost of living pressures.

Home Modifications

Members discussed the importance of access and support for home modifications, noting need for expanding that support and in a systematic way.

Pre-Budget Submission

Members discussed priorities for 2027-28 submission and endorsed the following recommendations:

1. Introduction of a 'one-off' stamp duty concession for older people looking to move into a new home
2. Incentivise Liveable Housing Design Standards for new residential housing
3. Expand access to home modifications and accessibility support through existing state government programs and partnerships
4. Increase council and water rate concessions, and implement annual Indexation
5. Expand access to preventative oral health services for older Western Australians

Support at Home exclusions

Members raised concerns with the growing exclusions with services available through Support at Home Program (ie. window cleaning and funding for the pharmacy Webster packs). Members recommended new members take this to their national reference group given it is a federal issue.

Pillar Two: Safe and friendly communities***Legal Aid restraints***

Members raised concern over limited legal support, and lack of awareness of firms providing this information. It was agreed there is a need to ensure the legal rights of older people on matters relating to aged care, family violence, safety planning options, Power of Attorney and Guardianship. The group requested Advocare source this information and include for discussion at the next meeting.

Pillar Three: Staying connected and engaged

The CEO reported Advocare has opened a budget wise survey to see where the pinch points are for older people managing everyday costs with increasing inflation. The information collected will be used to produce statistics to better understand needs and shape planning and policy into the future. Members agreed to help distribute this through their networks.