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National Dementia Action Plan Submission

Submission to Department of Health and Aged Care, Australian Government

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The Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM) welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Department of Health and Ageing on the development of a National Dementia Action Plan. We commend the Government's focus on putting people living with dementia, their families, and carers at the centre of all action on dementia.

The BCCM is the national peak body for Australian co-operatives and mutuals. Co-operatives and mutuals provide essential services and affordable pricing to their members across the economy from banking, insurance and superannuation to retail, agriculture, health, social care and housing. Serving eight in every 10 Australians, co-operatives and mutuals are private sector, member-owned and operated corporations regulated under the harmonised state and territory Co-operatives National Law or under the Corporations Act (Mutual Companies).

With an increasing number of Australians being impacted by either their own or someone else's dementia, and ongoing issues with the quality of care and dementia-friendliness of our communities, it is timely to develop a National Action Plan. The BCCM would like to engage with Government to explore how co-operatives can help people-centred care delivery for people living with dementia, and their families and carers.

Care Together

The BCCM have been funded by the Commonwealth Government to deliver Australia's first Co-operative and Mutual Enterprise (CME) Support Program in social care sectors, called Care Together.

Care Together is a cross sector place-based program that will give opportunities for social care providers to explore a transition to co-operative business models to address workforce challenges and ensure services are responsive to consumers and their families and to the people who care for them. New CME models will help to address critical workforce issues (including workforce satisfaction, attraction and retention, skill development and training), enhance choice for consumers and increase access to quality and safe services. This will help improve the long-term sustainability of social care in these locations.

Care Together is an advisory and support program that will assist successful projects to develop sustainable service delivery in areas where current approaches are failing. This includes a focus in regional, rural, and remote parts of Australia.

Care Together will undertake the following activities:

1. Support a minimum of four new start-up CMEs that provide sustainable workforce solutions in thin markets.
2. Identify and support up to eight growth projects that involve the expansion of CMEs, or mutuals in conversion.
3. Develop a digital innovation project to enable small and medium sized co-operatives to be networked in diverse communities as secondary co-operatives and to share back-office business and administrative services, that may include staff rostering, administrative processes, payroll, financial management capabilities and other support services.
4. Provide consultancy advice services to the start-up and growth entities, in the areas of:
 - Information and capacity building
 - Business model innovation
 - Legal, finance and business feasibility.

5. Broader awareness raising and information activities to continue to stimulate interest from the social care sector in co-operative and mutual business models.
6. Undertake an independent evaluation of the Program to identify best practice and lessons learned.

Response to the consultation paper

The BCCM supports the vision, principles and objectives identified in the consultation paper. In particular objectives 3, 4, 5 and 6.

3. Improving dementia diagnosis and post-diagnostic care and support

Co-operatives include the potential for families and carers to collaborate to support a person living with dementia, as is done for people with disability in SILC. In SILC residential services small houses are managed by family with support staff coming in. In the case of dementia this model can provide a supportive environment for families to jointly care for the person with dementia, allowing a home like environment without the need for institutional living.

4. Improving treatment, coordination and support along the dementia journey

Current residential support arrangements can be inappropriate for people living with dementia and due to the large institutional size, subject to lockdowns as a result of infectious diseases, excluding family support. A smaller house-sized support arrangement, like SILC, could provide better care for people living with dementia, allowing family to reside with them and contribute to their care. Co-locating the houses would facilitate in-home professional care provision and clusters of such co-operative, supported housing could contribute to the creation of dementia friendly neighborhoods.

5. Supporting people caring for those living with dementia

Co-operative arrangements bring family and other carers of a person living with dementia together. This reduces/eliminates the isolation of carers.

6. Building dementia capability in the workforce

Creating an active role for care workers in the decision-making around care, as identified in the Care Together program, increases workplace satisfaction and retention.

About the BCCM

The BCCM is the national industry peak body for co-operatives and mutuals, working with governments, regulators and policymakers to ensure the Australian economic landscape is fully able to benefit from a competitive co-op and mutual movement.

Through its member co-ops and mutuals, the BCCM represents 11 million individuals and 160,000 businesses.

The BCCM has supported new co-operatives and mutuals to form in a range of sectors and is a member of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) with access to world-wide networks.

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