

# Aged care services transition



We have been repeatedly assured by the Federal Government and the private providers that nobody on the Mornington Peninsula is going without essential care. Our residents are still getting the essential care they need such as showering and shopping.

We have been told some domestic services such as cleaning are taking longer to establish but that Bolton Clarke and Mecwacare are working hard to resolve these issues.

The care of our residents is paramount to us which is why Council offered to retain staff to help with the transition, but the Federal Government rejected that offer. The transition hasn't been as smooth as we would have hoped, but unfortunately most of this process has been out of our control.

The bigger picture here is there is a national shortage of aged care staff – the sector needs an extra 35,000 workers. This is not just a problem on the Mornington Peninsula. No-one can get staff.

The Federal Government appointed the new providers, we did not get a say in this process. Council's role was actively diminished throughout the transition, despite offers to help. We did everything in our power to prepare for the transition including contacting every one of our clients seeking their preferred provider and permission to give their details to their chosen provider.

We have been in contact with the Federal government both informally and formally on an almost daily basis. We have also reached out to both Mecwacare and Bolton Clarke.

Since we found out about the Federal Government's reforms in 2016, we've worked hard to determine an approach that would deliver the best outcome for our community.

The Federal Government's decision to create an open market for the provision of in-home services and to shift from upfront block funding for these services left us with no choice but to withdraw from the market. Council can't compete with the large private sector operators that are preferred through this model.

After extensive community consultation, we told the Federal Government we were withdrawing and spent the past two years making sure our clients were fully aware there would be a transition on June 30 this year and preparing them for that.

Our main concern was giving our community the best chance at attracting quality service providers in readiness for the new open market system. Residents in Melbourne are in an enviable position of having many aged care providers already established in their communities. The Peninsula had no provider other than Council capable of delivering the broad range of services in a geographical area much bigger than metropolitan councils.

Metropolitan councils do not face the challenges we face. Because of our larger area it takes extra time for staff to travel between clients, which drives up the cost. To keep costs down, some councils restrict the number of clients they will provide services to. We couldn't do that as our residents did not have a choice of alternative providers.

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We have one of the largest populations of elderly people in Victoria, yet there was a limited choice of funded private providers who were based on the Peninsula. We had to find a way to attract quality service providers to the Peninsula.

We made the decision in the best interests of our residents. We also had to consider the impact on Shire staff who were faced with job insecurity and uncertainty for years after the Federal Government announcement in 2016.

This is a complex issue with no easy answers and not everyone is going to be happy. But Council made the best decision it could under the circumstances to ensure the Peninsula has quality service providers already operating here before the new open market system begins.

**Councillor Anthony Marsh**  
**Mayor**  
**Mornington Peninsula Shire Council**