



**Australian Government**

**Department of Health, Disability and Ageing**

Ref No: MC25-015835

Stephen Gowlland  
Merriwaprogress@gmail.com

Dear Mr Gowlland,

I refer to your correspondence of 20 August 2025 to the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast in New South Wales the Hon. Ryhan Park MP regarding Gummun Place Hostel. Your letter has been referred to the Minister for Health and Ageing and the Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the Hon Mark Butler MP. The Minister has asked me to reply.

The Australian Government acknowledges the vital role of local government aged care providers such as Upper Hunter Shire Council (UHSC) in supporting older Australians. We recognise the significant financial and operational challenges faced by rural and regional aged care providers and remain committed to exploring viable and sustainable solutions. Furthermore, aged care providers as operators and managers of aged care services need to ensure their service delivery meets the needs of all aged care residents in a safe and appropriate manner. This may necessitate operational business decisions to ensure the wellbeing of residents and that appropriate quality and building standards are met.

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (the Department) is actively engaging with UHSC and supported them through the Business and Workforce Advisory Service to identify opportunities and solutions for Gummun Place Hostel. More intensive support is now being made available through the Rural, Remote and First Nations Aged Care Service Development Assistance Panel, and the Department continues to work closely with UHSC to provide tailored support through our programs.

UHSC as the approved provider operating Gummun Place Hostel has not advised the Department of its intent to close the service. Should UHSC decide to close Gummun Place Hostel, as the approved provider it will have to meet Security of Tenure provisions for all residents, which are outlined in the Aged Care Act 1997. This will require the provider to ensure suitable and acceptable alternative accommodation is found for each of the residents. In addition, the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) is available to support residents and their families through the process.

The Department and the Australian Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission will continue to monitor the situation to ensure the wellbeing and safety of residents impacted by any operational decisions.

Thank you for taking the time to explain your concerns in phone calls to Vaughan Kirkby on 6 and 26 May 2025. Should you wish to discuss these matters further, you may continue to contact the department's Northern New South Wales Regional Director, Mr Kirkby via phone on 0497 915 591 or by email at [NSWNorthernRegional@health.gov.au](mailto:NSWNorthernRegional@health.gov.au).

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vaughan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Vaughan Kirkby  
Director, Northern New South Wales Local Network  
NSW/ACT State Office  
Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing  
GPO Box 9848, Sydney NSW 2001  
29 August 2025