



Australian Government
Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Ref No: MC25-010701

Mr Stephen Gowlland
President
Merriwa District Progress Association
merriwaprogress@gmail.com

Dear Mr Gowlland

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 June 2025 to Minister for Aged Care and Seniors, the Hon Sam Rae MP, and the Assistant Minister for Health and aged Care, Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health and Assistant Minister for Women, the Hon Rebecca White MP, regarding the future of Gummun Place Aged Care Hostel. 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 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 is actively engaging with UHSC and has 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 or to transition operations to another provider. Should UHSC decide to cease being the operator of 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 resident. In addition, the Older Persons Advocacy Network 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 operational decisions.

Regarding your request to apply influence for UHSC's application in the latest competitive Aged Care Capital Assistance Program grant opportunity (GO7524), applications for GO7524 have now closed, with submitted applications undergoing assessment by the Department. In the interests of probity and transparency, the Minister is unable to discuss the merits of any application during this period but does appreciate and acknowledge your support. Outcomes for GO7524 are expected to be announced from September 2025 and will be published on the Department's website at www.health.gov.au/accap.

Thank you for taking the time to request information from the Department's Northern New South Wales Local Network about how to become an approved provider on 6 May 2025, and for explaining your concerns in a phone call to Vaughan Kirkby on 26 May 2025. Please note that the department will remain in close contact with UHSC to provide ongoing support. In the meantime, should you wish to discuss these matters further, you may continue to contact Mr Kirkby via phone on 0497 915 591 or by email at NSWNorthernRegional@health.gov.au.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely



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