



Aged Care Workforce Remote Accord Response to Treasury on the National Approach to Worker Screening in the Care and Support Economy

October 2025



About the Aged Care Workforce Remote Accord

The Aged Care Workforce Remote Accord (the Remote Accord) is a group of service providers and industry experts delivering aged care services in regional and remote areas of Australia.

The Remote Accord was formed based on the belief that every community – including those in remote and very remote areas of Australia – has an equal right to accessible, high quality aged care services.

The Remote Accord saw its genesis in the 'A Matter of Care: Australia's Aged Care Workforce Strategy' report; Strategic Action 11 recommended that the Government and industry support the establishment of a Remote Accord.

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Introduction

This submission to Treasury is made by the Aged Care Workforce Remote Accord (Remote Accord) in response to the September 2025 consultation paper on National Approach to Worker Screening in the Care and Support Economy. In giving this response, the Remote Accord wishes to ensure that the unique challenges facing service providers and their clients in remote and very remote Australian communities are given consideration. This submission draws on direct feedback from providers working in Modified Monash Model (MMM) regions 5 to 7 who have highlighted how worker screening impacts remote and very remote workforces.

↳ Key Recommendations

The Remote Accord is responding to this paper with a focus on the benefits of combining current worker screening checks into one Care and Support Economy (CSE) check. The Remote Accord strongly agrees that simplifying screening processes can boost the aged care workforce. The Remote Accord cautions against creating mutual recognition for the four checks already in use, as this is likely to create additional work and greater fragmentation in the long run. Our key recommendations are to:

- Streamline screenings for remote aged care workers, with an emphasis on reducing barriers in completing screening checks.
- Ensure remote service providers are able to exercise discretion when it comes to recruitment of local workers.



➤ Recommendation 1: Streamline Worker Screenings

Workers in remote Australia face barriers to completing worker screenings, such as police checks, working with vulnerable people checks, and NDIS applications. Workers that need to verify identity documents in person, but live in remote communities, may need to drive up to four hours to attend a post office where they can verify their documents. Additionally, many workers in remote Australia do not have enough documentation to meet the minimum 100 points required to complete applications.

Case Study

Logistical Challenges to Completing Worker Screenings

“We face logistical challenges in completing these checks:

Other employees or the Residential Manager must assist a majority of new locally based employees with online applications due to the lack of computer skills. This also means that on some occasions an employee has not yet applied for an NDIS check before they begin on site due to the complexity of the remote location. We do ask employees at these sites to undertake a police check but they still need assistance on site to do this.

In one remote location, a four-hour drive one way is required to visit a Department of Transport or post office for an employee to have their identification documents sighted and recorded. The Residential Manager has resorted to driving out a group of employees and returning them (fully paid) to achieve the application. Some locally based employees do not have drivers’ licences (or other forms of ID) that can add complexity to the NDIS application process in the ability to drive there and in providing the required identification for an NDIS check.”

– from a Service Manager working at a remote service

The need for one worker screening check

Many service providers in remote and very remote Australia offer aged care and NDIS services, which means their employees must complete multiple screening applications; this can be prohibitive to workers in terms of time and cost. The complexity of worker screening in remote areas drives candidates to seek employment elsewhere, such as roles where entry requirements are less intimidating, timelier, and more accommodating to the realities of remote life.



Workers already face fragmented and complex screening systems. Enabling mutual recognition of checks across sectors is likely to result in increased fragmentation and make it harder for workers to understand what check to apply for, especially if they are working at a multidisciplinary service. Additionally, it will create a greater administrative burden for employers to identify what check their employees should apply for.

A better alternative would be to combine all the current worker screening checks into one CSE check. This would mean employees only have to complete one application and would reduce the administrative burden that remote service providers face in assisting their employees with screening. **The Remote Accord recommends that the current worker screening checks are combined into one CSE check. Whilst this will require greater overhaul of current systems, in the long term it will result in reduced fragmentation and simplify the screening process for workers.**



➤ Recommendation 2: Give Remote Service Providers Discretion

Having one centralised CSE check will streamline screening and reduce barriers to entering the aged care workforce in remote Australia. However, it is vital that service providers also have discretion to make hiring decisions in regards to hiring local workforce. Remote services need discretion to mitigate risk for prospective workers who cannot complete worker screening requirements but are otherwise fit to work in aged care.

The need for local discretion

In remote areas, the needs of those accessing care differ from people in metropolitan areas, with a greater emphasis placed on cultural and community needs. Hiring local workers is the gold standard in remote areas, especially in communities where there is a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Local workers are well placed to understand the cultural needs of their community. The unique nature of remote communities needs to be accommodated in screening processes, by giving employers discretion over the registration of local workers.

Restricting employer discretion in worker screening can disincentivise the engagement of local, culturally appropriate workforces, deepening the workforce gap in an already stretched sector.

In some remote communities, workers have criminal records that disqualify them on police checks, with unclear avenues for recourse. The need to avoid discouraging local workforces cannot be overstated. If the perception spreads that there is no room for discretion for individuals who know their background checks may raise concerns, potential employees may self-select out of the aged care workforce entirely. Discretion sitting with employers allows a trusting relationship to develop within communities and improves provider/community relationships.



Case Study

Police Check Screening

“I have multiple examples of people we have hired that have had significant criminal charges or driving offences. I’ve used my discretion to evaluate violent offences, which have turned out to be fit for tat domestic violence charges related to a specific single relationship, or those who as an eighteen-year-old had an incident at a pub or club that has come back to haunt them years later.

I’ve also had driving charges stemming from rural areas where the police will often target and ‘load up’ Aboriginal people. I am accustomed to receiving more serious Adverse Disclosures that I’m required to make a judgement call on.

Many are historical, many involve domestic violence, and many involve alcohol fuelled incidents. I treat each one as an isolated incident and weigh up a number of things, circumstance, open disclosure by candidate, and the propensity for police to ‘load up’ Aboriginal offenders.”

– from a specialised provider of First Nations home care and aged care services

A single CSE screening check must have scope to involve local employers on the ground in remote Australia, who know their communities best. Employers are well placed to assist locals with screening and make key decisions around worker suitability and recruitment. This could be achieved by creating a carve out with increased discretion for MMM 6 and 7 communities.