

## 7.2.4 COMMONWEALTH AGED CARE REFORM - SINGLE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM TENDER

<b>Responsible Manager:</b>	Mary Martin, Manager Aged and Community Support
<b>Responsible Director:</b>	Russell Hopkins, Director Community Services

### RECOMMENDATION

#### That Council:

- 1. Not submit a tender for the Commonwealth Single Assessment System for aged care given the significant increase in the size and complexity of the new system in comparison to Council's current role in assessment.**
- 2. Accept the extension of the current contract for the Regional Assessment Service to 31 December 2024, dependent upon the terms being no less favourable than the current contract.**

### INTRODUCTION

Changes to the provision of support to Australia's aged population have been planned for some years, with the most recent timeline provided by the Commonwealth indicating that these changes will now begin as of 1 January 2025 with changes to the assessment system, followed progressively by changes to the integration and delivery of services as part of the new Support at Home program in subsequent years. Ultimately a single in-home care program will replace the Home Care Packages (HCP) and Short-Term Restorative Care (STRC) programs (not provided by Council), as well as the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) which is currently delivered by Council and a range of other service providers. Decisions relating to the assessment process do not impact on Council's capacity to deliver CHSP as a service provider.

The tender documentation for the Single Assessment System for aged care was released on 31 January 2024, with a closing date for submissions of 14 March 2024. Officers have since attended a Commonwealth information session and reviewed the tender documentation.

### COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

This item relates to Council's Inclusive Services Strategic Objective.

### BACKGROUND

#### Aged Care Assessment

A person needs to be assessed before they can access government-funded aged care services. An aged care assessment works out:

- A person's care needs.
- The types of care and services a person may be eligible for.

A new single assessment system will operate from 1 January 2025 to simplify and improve access to aged care services. Around 500,000 older people seek access to aged care services nationally each year.

The new system will replace the existing:

- Regional Assessment Service (RAS) – used for the Commonwealth Home Support Programme
- Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACATs) – used for:
  - The Home Care Packages Program
  - The Short-Term Restorative Care Programme
  - The Transition Care Programme
  - Residential respite
  - Entry to residential aged care

Council's current role is exclusively in the RAS and relates only to City of Monash residents.

The single assessment system is intended to simplify and improve the experience of older people by providing a flexible system that can quickly adapt to their aged care needs. As outlined above, currently there are different assessment systems, which means assessments are not consistent and older people are often moved between assessment organisations as their needs change.

The new system will provide a single assessment pathway that can quickly adapt to changing needs, without having to change assessment providers. This means that as an individual's support needs increase, they remain within the one system rather than requiring reassessment to access higher levels of assistance.

A new Integrated Assessment Tool will collect better information to ensure service recommendations and referrals are tailored to each person's needs. The Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care is conducting an open tender for organisations with the capability and capacity to deliver aged care assessments under the new Single Assessment System from 1 January 2025.

## DISCUSSION

As outlined, the current assessment system has two pathways; RAS which is undertaken by the City of Monash for the municipality, and ACATs. Assessments determine whether an older person is eligible for government-subsidised aged care. Assessors visit the older person's home or hospital to -

- understand the person's care needs;
- decide on the types of services they may be eligible for; and
- create a support plan based on their care needs.

Under the RAS program, Council's assessors carry out home support assessments, booked via the Commonwealth's My Aged Care program. Home support assessments are for people who may need entry-level support to help them stay at home. Home support assessments usually take place in the older person's home.

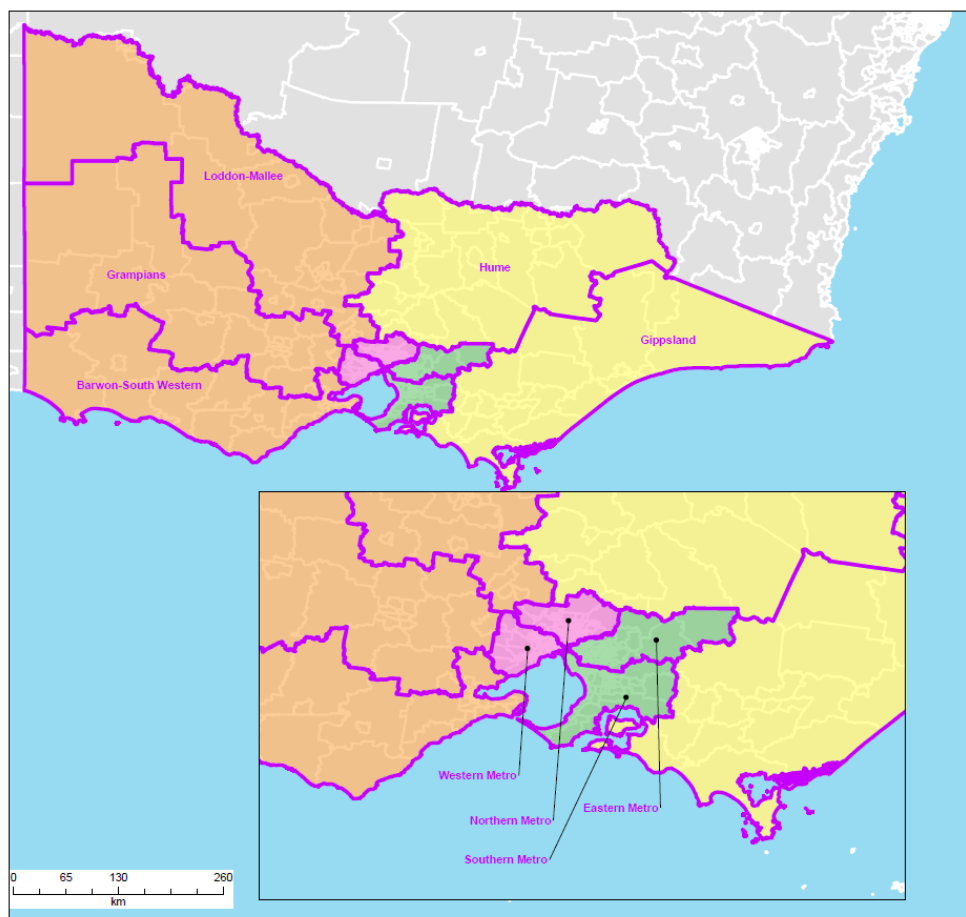
Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACATs) carry out comprehensive assessments. ACATs are teams of medical, nursing and allied health professionals. Comprehensive assessments are for people with more complex needs. These assessments are for people who may need:

- A higher level of home care through the Home Care Packages Program.
- Residential aged care including respite.
- Transition care.
- Short-term restorative care.

Comprehensive assessments usually take place in the older person's home. They can also take place in a hospital. Council plays no role in this assessment process. These two pathways will become a Single Assessment System as of 1 January 2025. Council staff currently undertake assessments for entry level services

only and while training is provided in how to undertake such an assessment, typically they are not qualified to undertake assessments for people with more complex needs.

The release of the tender documentation by the Commonwealth on 31 January 2024 has provided detail on the scope of the four Assessment Service Areas across Victoria (shown below).



The area which includes Monash is **Vic 2** which incorporates the Southern and Eastern Metro Aged Care Planning regions stretching from Healesville and the Yarra Valley through to the Mornington Peninsular, and from Albert Park to Bunyip. Vic 2 has the largest population of the four Victorian regions at 2,741,304, with an over-65 years population of 431,720 and annual aged care assessments of 44,929. By comparison, Monash’s annual assessment target is currently 3,775.

As such, it is not considered that the capacity or experience exists internally to significantly expand the scope and scale of Council’s assessment service to meet the requirements of the new Single Assessment System.

Tenderers may submit a consortium Tender. Where a Tenderer is submitting a Tender as a consortium, the Tenderer must ensure the Tender nominates a single legal entity. Where a Tenderer submits a consortium Tender, the Lead Tenderer must identify all other members of the proposed consortium in the Tender. At this stage Monash has not been invited to be part of a consortium by any party, local government or otherwise. Given the geographic scope and scale of Vic 2 it is not expected that local government authorities will seek to be a Lead Tenderer, however that is a decision for each organisation.

It is important to note that a decision not to submit a tender for the Single Assessment System should not impact upon Council’s ability to provide services under the existing CHSP. Just as the RAS team currently refer

clients to a range of appropriate services once assessed, any new assessment agency will still refer clients to Monash as a service provider via the My Aged Care portal.

Local Government's Award conditions are typically more generous than other providers in the aged care sector. Accordingly, Monash is unlikely to be competitive in an open tender process or attractive to a consortium, particularly as it lacks the economies of scale of many other existing assessment providers. It is expected that the size of the assessment workforce required to cover Vic 2 would require Council to engage not only additional and more highly qualified assessment staff but also additional resources in areas such as Finance and People & Safety.

The new Single Assessment System will assess individuals for eligibility across an increasingly complex range of services, from basic home care through to entry to residential aged care. Council's RAS staff undertake assessments related to entry level home support services only. As such, a more highly qualified assessment workforce will be required to undertake the more complex assessments. This would necessitate a significant uplift of Council's existing workforce from both an EFT and qualifications perspective. Council currently engages 10 staff in its RAS team.

Should Monash not submit a tender and accepts the Contract Extension until 31 December 2024 a formal transition plan must be developed. The Commonwealth has advised that it must receive a transition plan no later than four months prior to the expiry of an existing contract. Council's existing contract term ends on 30 June 2024. Given that the Tender documentation was only released on 31 January and closes on 14 March 2024 this does not allow for an appropriate transition plan and process to be developed four months prior to the expiry date of the existing contract. As such it is proposed that Council accept the contract extension on no less favourable terms than the current contract.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is not expected that the decision to not tender for the Single Assessment System will have a significant impact on Council's operational budget as it is close to a cost-neutral service and is funded by the Commonwealth.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct policy implications related to this report, however this tender forms part of the Commonwealth Government's Aged Care Reform agenda and move to the new Support at Home program.

## CONSULTATION

Community consultation was not undertaken as the tender process is being undertaken by the Commonwealth Government.

## SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is anticipated that the Single Assessment System will be beneficial to those entering and transitioning through the aged care system as it will provide a single assessment pathway that can adapt to changing needs, without having to change assessment providers. This means that as an individual's support needs increase, they remain within the one system rather than requiring reassessment to access higher levels of assistance.

## HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

There are no human rights implications to this report.

## GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A GIA was not completed as the assessment of those seeking to enter the aged care system will continue to occur under the new Single Assessment System.

## CONCLUSION

Officers have attended the information session convened by the Commonwealth for prospective tenderers and reviewed the tender documentation and do not believe that Council should seek to tender for the new Single Assessment System for aged care given that the nature and scale is far beyond Council's current role, capacity and experience. It is proposed that:

- No tender is submitted by the City of Monash for the Commonwealth Single Assessment System for aged care.
- The City of Monash accepts the extension of the current contract for the Regional Assessment Service to 31 December 2024, dependent upon the terms being no less favourable than the current contract.

## ATTACHMENT LIST

Nil