



# Care Together

A co-operative and mutual enterprises support program

## WHAT IS CARE TOGETHER?

The Care Together Program is Australia's first co-operative and mutual enterprise support program in social care. The Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM), the national cross-sector body for co-operatives and mutuals, is delivering the program, funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Health and Aged Care.

The \$7 million education, advisory and support program assists selected projects to develop sustainable care services in areas where current approaches are not working. It focuses on older Australians, people living with disability, veterans and First Nations people in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia.

The BCCM is working with communities to co-design social care projects in areas deemed most in need by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. Between now and mid-2025, the program will:

- Support the development of at least four new co-operatives or mutuals in social care.
- Support up to eight growth and scaling projects working with existing co-ops and mutuals or organisations converting to a co-op or mutual.
- Facilitate the co-design of a digitally enabled secondary co-operative to deliver back-office functions for smaller care providers.

## WHY IS CARE TOGETHER NEEDED?

For too many Australians, the current approaches to delivering care services are not working. As our country changes in vast and profound ways, so too must our approach to social care.

Around the world, co-operatives and mutuals are putting care services back in the hands of the people who matter the most. But Australia has relatively fewer co-operatives and mutuals in this sector.

The co-operative and mutual business models can increase diversity and choice in Australian health, community and social services with innovative, community-based solutions for improving the appropriateness and sustainability of services in thin markets.



## WHAT IS A CO-OPERATIVE OR MUTUAL?

Co-operatives and mutuals are member-owned businesses formed to benefit the people who use or work in them rather than shareholders. They operate according to the internationally recognised principles of member democratic control, economic participation and concern for the community.

It is these tried and tested principles that keep co-operatives and mutuals focused on delivering value to current and future members and their communities, and have led the sector to grow to 33.3 million memberships in Australia across 1,848 active co-ops and mutuals with a combined turnover of \$40.4 billion.

These include organisations that provide social care, aged care and disability services, health care, housing, veterans' care and Indigenous services. Co-ops and mutuals can have different types of members. They can be customers, policyholders, small businesses, producers or employees. Member-owned super funds are also mutuals.

## HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

The BCCM's [Action to Empower](#) report provides more information on how co-operative and mutual business models can increase diversity and choice in care services in Australia with positive outcomes for accountability, innovation, quality and productivity.

The BCCM's Social Care Community of Practice is a network of people and enterprises interested in business model innovation to empower consumers and workers in social care.

To submit an Expression of Interest, join the Social Care Community of Practice, or find out more about Care Together, email [caretogether@bccm.coop](mailto:caretogether@bccm.coop)



## ABOUT THE BCCM

The BCCM is Australia's peak body for co-operative and mutual enterprises. It advocates for an enabling business environment for co-ops and mutuals, and through its annual [National Mutual Economy](#) report, it has created a platform for discussing their vital role in the national economy.

The BCCM develops and runs education and training programs, industry events and conferences and undertakes research projects to present and promote the importance of co-ops and mutuals. As of June 30, 2023, BCCM has 102 members representing nearly 12.5 million Australians.

Visit [caretogether.coop](https://caretogether.coop) for further information, case studies of social care co-operatives, or to subscribe to our mailing list.

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