The Department of Health (the Department) welcomed participants to the Resource Utilisation and Classification Study (RUCS) and Residential Aged Care Funding Reform Stakeholder Forum.

Professor Kathy Eagar from the Australian Health Services Research Institute (AHSRI) at the University of Wollongong provided participants an overview of the RUCS and gave an update on the project. Slides from the presentation have been provided along with this communique. Professor Eagar focussed on early results from the first study (Study One) that is designed to identify the drivers of costs related to aged care residents’ individual need for care. The results showed that the study’s resident assessment tool took on average, an hour to complete and Professor Eagar presented some of the data captured from the tool. Study assessors reported they were very confident or fairly confident that they had captured accurate ratings for over 90% of all assessments.

Participants were generally very positive about the initial findings from Study One. There was a broad consensus that the Aged Care Funding Instrument is no longer fit for purpose and funding reform should be a priority in the sector.

Following Professor Eagar’s presentation, participants discussed key sector related issues and impacts that could occur if AHSRI’s proposed fixed-variable casemix funding system was implemented. Participants touched on impacts to provider IT systems, ensuring quality of care, implications of an external and independent assessor workforce, and how rural and remote funding would be addressed.

Participants also discussed transition challenges and strategies for managing transition if the fixed-variable casemix funding system was to be implemented.

The Department reiterated that no Government decisions have been made on residential aged care funding reform.

Participants agreed that another stakeholder forum be held in the next few months to continue the engagement and information sharing. The Department is looking into potential dates for the next forum.