



## **Royal Commission backs aged care transformation to put older people's rights first**

OPAN welcomes the Government's response to the findings from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, and stands ready to work alongside the Government and other stakeholders to implement the recommendations.

Craig Gear, Chief Executive Officer of the Older Persons Advocacy Network, comprising member organisation in each state and territory, said the current system fails to meet older people's fundamental human rights.

"The aged care system is not rights-based and does not have the resources and structures in place to ensure the human rights of older people are respected, protected and enforced," Mr Gear said.

"A lack of capacity and lack of intent by many aged care providers to implement the Charter of Aged Care Rights in practice is a reflection of the deficits in the current system.

"This is a watershed moment, which must result in older people being placed at the centre of the aged care transformation process. OPAN will continue to support older people and work alongside the government and the aged care sector to make this happen.

"Older people must be actively engaged in this transformation through co-design to re-shape the aged care system to place vulnerable older people and older people with diverse characteristics and life experiences at its core".

The Older Persons Advocacy Network fully supports Recommendation 106, which states by July 2022, the Australian government should consult with the Older Persons Advocacy Network, as the contracted provider of services under the National Aged Care Advocacy Program, to determine the extent of unmet demand for advocacy services by people seeking or receiving aged care.

Further, it recommends consultation should consider the need for additional funding for education and systemic advocacy for older people, and capacity building of advocacy services.

Also, the network backs the Royal Commission's recommended interim measure, that the Australian government immediately increase funding to the National Aged Care Advocacy Program to enable a minimum of 5% of older people to access advocacy and enable advocacy networks to provide education and undertake systemic advocacy.

Mr Gear also said that today's findings may disturb and concern older Australians and their families. Free, independent support is available by contacting OPAN on 1800 700 600 or visiting [opan.com.au](http://opan.com.au).

According to the Office of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, about 39.2 per cent of people living in residential aged care facilities across Australia experience abuse in the form of neglect, emotional or physical abuse.

More than half of the online submissions to the Royal Commission raised substandard care issues, while 40 per cent raised concerns about neglect, 39 per cent about dignity and 37 per cent about personal care. Mr Gear said any level of abuse, neglect or substandard care is unacceptable.

Mr Gear urged the broader aged care sector to work with older people, governments and stakeholders to pursue rapid transformation of aged care.

"Today, the Royal Commission has confirmed that aged care must move from a substitute decision-maker model to a supported decision-maker model, which means preferencing the choices of the older person, and upholding their right to make these choices," Mr Gear said.

"The choice and dignity of older people should be the top priority.

"We want to see older people empowered and enabled to self-manage their home care packages and have the option of seeking a care manager if they wish.

"Older people must remain the decision-maker and retain choice and control over all decisions about their care and services, whether they are receiving home care services or living in residential aged care. It is up to all of us to ensure they retain connections, activities and engagement with their communities.

Mr Gear said it was vital that older people receive information that suits them best and that aged care services involve older people in the decisions affecting them.

"During what must be a period of significant transformation in aged care, it is essential that older Australians are supported and have timely access to information and advocacy support to assist with understanding and navigating the complexities of aged care.

"Advocacy provides a crucial means for individuals to understand and exercise their rights when engaging with the aged care system. All older people should have equitable access to advocacy services that promote and protect their rights across all issues impacting their overall health, wellbeing and quality of life," Mr Gear said.

**Media contact: Afsah Haque 0410 860 435**

## **IMPORTANT NOTICE TO MEDIA FOR STORIES RELATING TO OLDER PEOPLE**

During media coverage of aged care issues, it is important to provide an avenue for older Australians to obtain support. This is akin to providing domestic violence victims or mental health sufferers the appropriate resources to seek help when difficult issues are raised.

All media surrounding aged care issues or the impact of COVID-19 on older Australians should



include the following message to enable people to find help:

"For information or support regarding aged care please call the Older Persons Advocacy Network on 1800 700 600 or visit [opan.com.au](http://opan.com.au)"

The Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) are Australia's leading advocates for older Australians receiving aged care.

### **What is Advocacy?**

Advocacy is the process of standing beside someone and supporting them to:

- understand and exercise their rights
- have their voice heard on the issues that are important to them.

### **What is an Advocate?**

An advocate:

- takes the time to listen and understand your views and wishes
- informs you of your rights and responsibilities
- assists you to explore your options and make informed decisions
- supports you to raise your concerns and work towards a resolution
- provides practical assistance, such as help to write a letter or raise your concerns at a meeting
- speaks for you in situations where you don't feel able to speak for yourself
- increases your capacity to self-advocate.

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