

Keep these numbers handy

Older Persons Advocacy Network
1800 700 600

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
1800 951 822

My Aged Care
1800 200 422

National Dementia Helpline
1800 100 500

National Seniors Australia
1300 765 050

Lifeline
13 11 14

Legal Aid Tasmania
1300 366 611

FriendLine
1800 424 287

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



opan.org.au | Advocacy line 1800 700 600

We welcome your feedback. Email: enquiries@opan.org.au

The Older Persons Advocacy Network receives funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care for the National Aged Care Advocacy Program.

PUZZLE TIME

WORD FINDER

B	D	M	K	N	F	H	A
F	O	O	D	U	O	S	S
D	K	N	Z	T	V	E	S
C	T	O	L	R	Y	C	I
Q	A	I	N	I	M	N	S
M	N	T	X	T	U	A	T
E	V	A	F	I	V	N	A
G	G	T	S	O	Y	I	N
K	C	L	O	N	R	F	C
A	A	U	A	T	J	Q	E
O	V	S	S	E	E	F	X
A	Q	N	E	Y	P	J	C
M	S	O	W	S	P	X	R
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FINANCES ASSISTANCE ACT CONSULTATION

FOOD NUTRITION HOTLINE FEES

SUDOKU

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Staying on top of aged care costs

OPAN's advocates and specialist financial advocacy officers can provide information and support on a range of different aged care issues, including

- rights in aged care
- raising concerns or complaints
- account statements
- fees and charges
- financial hardship applications
- moving into residential care
- transitioning between packages or services

Chat with us 1800 700 600

Our services are free, independent and confidential



To find out more visit opan.org.au or scan the QR code



News for You

Aged Care Advocacy Newsletter | April 2024 | Issue 9



Montana describes advocate Ramnik Walia as her 'last hope'.

Montana feared she would lose her home

Montana cared for her husband, Stanley, for 15 years after he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

But as the progressive condition worsened, she found she could no longer support him at home.

Reluctantly, they decided it was time for him to move into residential aged care.

The bills started to arrive almost immediately.

'I couldn't afford to pay,' says Montana.

'I was worried I was going to lose my house. I got very depressed.'

'My blood pressure went up every day. It was very dangerous.'

Montana phoned aged care advocate Ramnik (Nik) Walia, who she describes as her 'last hope.'

Ramnik helped Montana communicate her financial situation to Services Australia representatives and the aged care home.

'When your partner is living in residential aged care, and you are on a pension, your home is the only asset you have,' he says. 'It's your safe haven.'

Ramnik also helped Montana, as Stanley's substitute decision-maker, to make a successful application for financial hardship assistance.

As a result, the Australian Government agreed to pay some of Stanley's residential aged care fees and the service provider refunded a portion of the previous six months' charges.

'I feel very relieved,' says Montana. 'I don't have to worry anymore about what is going to happen.'

THE FUTURE OF AGED CARE

New Act puts the rights of older people first

The Australian Government has released a preliminary 'exposure' draft of its new Aged Care Act, which focuses on the rights, health, and wellbeing of older people.

A new Act was one of the key recommendations of the Aged Care Royal Commission, which acknowledged older people's bad experiences in the current system.

OPAN has been working with COTA Australia and 10 other organisations, including Dementia Australia, Carers Australia and RSL Australia, to ensure the voices of older people, their families and other representatives are heard during the consultation process. In March, we made a joint submission to the government identifying the

issues that still need to be addressed.

Why do we need a new Aged Care Act?

The new Aged Care Act aims to correct the power imbalance between older people and providers. It will replace the current aged care legislation, particularly the Aged Care Act 1997 (which largely focused on the regulation and payment of providers) and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Act 2018.

The new Act puts the needs and rights of older people first. It aims to create a simplified, rights-based legislative framework.

What is the timeline for the new Aged Care Act?

The Australian Government extended consultation on



the exposure draft of the new Aged Care Act to 8 March following feedback from stakeholders requesting more time to review the proposed changes and share their views. While OPAN welcomed this extension to ensure everyone with an interest in aged care could have their say, we believe the passage of a new rights-based Act remains an urgent priority for 2024. Older people can't wait any longer for their rights to be upheld.

To order a booklet on reforming aged care in Australia call 02 6269 1080.

CRISTINA'S STORY*

Cristina's story

Cristina has coeliac disease and must follow a strictly gluten-free diet. She also lives with a number of other food allergies and intolerances.

She called OPAN because the meals she was being served at her aged care home were bland, dry and largely inedible.

Cristina provided the advocate with photographs of her meals, which mainly consisted of chicken and rice, chicken and potato, and egg and rice.

She said she was given no choice about the food she was served and that she did not know what she was getting until it arrived.

At times, Cristina missed out on food altogether because the kitchen was unable to provide anything suitable.

At others, the meals Cristina was served aggravated her allergies and intolerances. Once, she was hospitalised by an adverse reaction.

Cristina nearly always missed out on morning



and afternoon tea.

Our advocate supported Cristina to raise these issues with her service provider and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

A change in management at the aged care home during this time aided the resolution process.

Supported by the advocate, Cristina worked with the new manager to develop a menu that was suitable for her complex dietary requirements and offered variety of choices.

Over time, Cristina has regained the weight she lost. Her food allergies and intolerances are now being well-managed.

Contact OPAN on 1800 700 600.

*Names have been changed for privacy reasons.

It's your choice

You have the right to make choices about your life in residential aged care. This includes what you eat and drink.

You can choose*:

- when and where to eat
- who you eat with
- what you eat and drink
- how much you eat and drink
- how you eat and drink
- to make cultural and religious choices about food, drink and dining
- whether you have assistance and support.

*Food choices must be within reason.

If you have issues or concerns about your food in residential aged care, call the **Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's Food, Nutrition and Dining Hotline on 1800 844 004 or OPAN on 1800 700 600.**

Speaking up for, not over, older people

Where older people need assistance in making decisions, the new Aged Care Act says the principles of supported decision-making must be followed.

How supported decision-making works

State and territories use different names for the person who can help you make decisions about your financial, personal or health matters. We refer to these people as substitute decision-makers.

Your substitute decision-maker should not make decisions on your behalf. They should include and support you in planning your life and future.

- **Everyone has the right to make or participate in decisions about the things that affect them.**
- **Your ability to make decisions must be assumed.**
- **You have the right to make decisions that involve risk and to learn from experience.**
- **You have the right to change your mind.**
- **You have the right to make decisions that others may not agree with.**

Free information sessions for residents on:

- your rights
- how advocates can assist you
- abuse of older people.

Call 1800 700 600 for more information on our free education sessions.

'You are the consumer. It's all about you.'

Aged care and dementia advocate Val Fell.

