

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, August 6, 2025

Minister hears the concerns of older people receiving aged care

The Minister for Aged Care and Seniors, Sam Rae, attended a meeting in Melbourne today to hear directly from older people about their views on the new rights-based Aged Care Act, which comes into effect on 1 November.

“Forums like this are a great opportunity for honest dialogue between older people, their advocates and government,” Minister Rae said

“The feedback I heard today reinforces the urgency of the Australian Government’s aged care reform agenda.

“Our new Aged Care Act represents a significant step forward in transforming aged care to create a system that has older people and their rights and dignity at its core.

“I’d like to thank everyone who took the time to share their views today for their commitment to working constructively together to build the aged care system our older Australians deserve.”

During the meeting, OPAN National Older Persons Reference Group members, COTA Australia representatives and others with living experience of the aged care system raised their concerns on affordability, costs and fees, and inequity for older people living in regional and remote areas.

OPAN CEO Craig Gear, COTA Australia CEO Patricia Sparrow and Council of Elders Chair Anne Burgess were also in attendance.

National Older Women’s Network President Beverly Baker spoke about the need to strengthen older people’s rights in the Aged Care Act.

“Without a national Human Rights Act, without the underpinning legislation, the Act is just nice words,” Ms Baker said.

Home Care Package recipient Helen Walne drew attention to discriminatory transport costs for older people living in rural and regional Australia.

“The \$140 cost of visiting a health care clinic has led me to cancel therapy treatment, resulting in hospital admissions due to diminished health,” she said.

Reference group member Robin Vote highlighted issues with the new model for in-home support.

“We’re concerned about equity, accessibility and affordability under the new Support at Home program,” she said. “And what about choice?”

“The more services you use, the more you have to pay, so the risk is the neediest people on the highest level packages may have to pay more than they can afford,” added Lesley Forster.

Perth-based reference group member Frank Smith addressed the lack of flexibility around inclusions and exclusions.

“They leave no choice to the individual. No welfare payment is more strongly controlled,” he said

While Mr Gear acknowledged older people’s concerns, he said the new Act was a marked improvement on the current legislation.

“It’s not the end of the journey but a starting point for the cultural change that has to happen in aged care. Reform will be ongoing.

“The Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, which was introduced to Parliament last month, recognises the need for such a large and ambitious piece of legislation to continue to evolve.

“It gives the Minister the power to make necessary adjustments to the Rules, with the requisite parliamentary scrutiny.”

Mr Gear said key areas of focus for OPAN over the coming 3 months, included:

- an agile assessment/reassessment system
- a planned approach to the release of home care packages,
- equity/availability of aged care services in rural areas, and
- accessible community transport.

He looked forward to more detail around a streamlined hardship application process to ensure pensioners could have their aged care fees waived in a timely manner.

“We continue to advocate for a rapid approval process that is completed within 28 days and for fees to be waived while the application is being considered. Older people with limited means have the same right to quality aged care as anyone else,” Mr Gear said.

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