

## Chat with us

Our aged care advocates can provide information and support on a range of different issues, including:

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

To find out more

**Call the Aged Care  
Advocacy Line on  
1800 700 600**

Our services are free,  
independent and  
confidential



Darwin Community Legal Service  
is the Northern Territory member  
of OPAN



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# News for You

**Aged care advocacy newsletter | December 2025 | Issue 13**



## A girl's best friend

When Alana moved into residential care more than 20 years ago, she was forced to give up her pet poodle.

'She went to a good home, but I was heartbroken,' she recalls.

Alana has been pleased to see a shift in aged care culture in the intervening years, culminating in the inclusion of older people's right to stay connected to their pets in the new Aged Care Act, which came into effect on 1 November.

'If you are capable of looking after your pet, you should be able to have one,' Alana says.

Encouraged by aged care staff, Alana found her 3-year-old Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Ruby online. The pair has been inseparable ever since.

'I'd be so lonely and lost without her. She gives me a purpose. I have to get up and do things for her.'

Ruby has made friends with staff and other residents, too.

'She makes a lot of people's days', Alana says.

Karen moved into the same aged care home just over a year ago. Pip, her 8-year-old fox terrier, accompanied her to the initial interview.

'I have a feeling one of my daughters would have taken her, if it had come to that, but it didn't, so that's good,' Karen says. 'I would have been pretty upset.'

Alana, Ruby, Karen and Pip regularly join a group of fellow animal lovers, including the aged care home's manager, for a walk in a nearby park.

For Alana, the benefits are obvious. Pip is slightly more ambivalent.

'She's terrible. As we walk along, whenever she sees somebody, she throws herself on the ground for a tummy tickle,' Karen says.

## NEW AGED CARE ACT

### Standing up for your rights

The Aged Care Royal Commission demonstrated the many ways in which people's basic human rights are eroded with age.

A Statement of Rights has been embedded into the new Aged Care Act to address this.

The Statement of Rights:

- presumes an older person is able to make their own decisions
- affirms an older person's right to be supported (if necessary) to make those decisions

- respects an older person's right to take personal risks
- recognises the role of supporters (for example, friends, family members, carers or other members of the community) and advocates.

Under the new Act, which comes into effect on 1 November 2025, providers are legally obliged to deliver services to older people in line with the Statement of Rights.

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission will have additional powers to address breaches of those rights, and older people will be able to

make a direct complaint to a new independent complaints commissioner about a provider acting in a way that is incompatible with their rights.

Rights will be actively reinforced through the strengthened Quality Standards, which come into effect at the same time, and the Aged Care Code of Conduct.



## Under the Statement of Rights, an older person's rights are grouped into 6 key areas:



Find out more about your aged care rights



### Autonomy and freedom of choice

I have the right to make my own choices – about my care, relationships, lifestyle and taking risks – with support if I want it.



### Equitable access

I have the right to have my needs assessed in a way that works for me, including having my cultural background, past trauma or cognitive conditions, such as dementia, respected.



### Communication and complaints

I have the right to be informed in a way I understand and to raise concerns without fear of reprisal. My feedback must be dealt with fairly and promptly.



### Safe, quality care

I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect by experienced aged care workers who value my identity, culture, spirituality and diversity.



### Privacy and confidentiality

I must have my privacy respected and my personal information kept confidential, and be in control of who this information is shared with.



### Support and social connections

I can stay connected to important people, pets and culture including independent advocates. As an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, I can stay connected to Country and Island Home.



## CASE STUDY

### Shirley's\* story

Shirley spoke to one of our aged care advocates following an education session at a regional aged care home. She said she was an Aboriginal person and wanted to remain on Country, but her aged care provider wasn't listening to her request.

Further discussion revealed that Shirley was in the current home on a respite stay. During that time, she had decided to move permanently into residential care because she was no longer managing at home. However, the care manager had told Shirley there was no available room at the home where she was currently staying. Instead, he offered her a place in another home some 45 minutes' drive away. The care manager had tried to reassure Shirley that the new home would still be close to her family and community.

However, Shirley explained to the advocate that although it seemed like the same area to white people, the new place

was on a different Country. She said she had lived on Country her whole life and that connection was very important to her.

At Shirley's request, the advocate spoke to the care manager, reminding him of Shirley's right, under the new Aged Care Act, to maintain her cultural and spiritual connection to Country. The care manager said he would need to discuss the matter further with his team.

When the aged care advocate followed up with Shirley the following week, she said the aged care home had offered her a room. She was very grateful she could remain living on Country.

\*Names have been changed for privacy reasons.



## On your side

More than 200 advocates are employed across our national 9-member network to ensure older people have access to the safe, high quality aged care they are entitled to.

The right to be supported by one of these advocates has been enshrined in the new Aged Care Act, which actively reinforces the network's core vision that advocates work 'at the direction of the individual, reflecting the individual's expressed wishes, will, preferences, interests and rights'.

**Call the Aged Care Advocacy Line on 1800 700 600**

Our services are free, independent and confidential

### Free information sessions for residents on:

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

**To book the Aged Care Advocacy Line 1800 700 600**

**'Quality aged care values older people's needs, wants and goals.'**

- Lesley Forster, National Older Persons Reference Group member



# Keep these numbers handy

## Darwin Community Legal Service (DCLS)

1800 700 600

(Free call)

## 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

## National Coronavirus Helpline

1800 020 080



## WORD FINDER

A	U	T	O	N	O	M	Y
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**AUTONOMY  
COMMUNICATION  
DECISIONS  
RESPECT**

**QUALITY  
SAFE  
COMPLAINTS  
RIGHTS**

## PUZZLE TIME

## SUDOKU

Fill the grid with the numbers 1 to 4 so each number is only used once in each row and column.

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We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways on which we live and work throughout Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge these lands have never been ceded.



**Darwin Community  
LEGAL SERVICE**

Northern Territory (Top End) member  
of the Older Persons Advocacy Network

Member organisations support you with free and  
independent aged care advocacy in each state or territory

**[dcls.org.au](http://dcls.org.au)**



Older Persons  
Advocacy Network

OPAN is the national peak body for aged care advocacy,  
with 9 member organisations delivering impactful  
advocacy, information, and education to older people.

You can email us on [enquiries@opan.org.au](mailto:enquiries@opan.org.au)

**[opan.org.au](http://opan.org.au)**

**Aged Care Advocacy Line**

**1 800 700 600**