



MEDIA RELEASE

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FEDERAL BUDGET: A MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE AGED CARE AND EMPOWER OLDER PEOPLE

The 2026/27 Federal Budget leaves many challenges within the aged care system, which risks older people being worse off.

While the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) acknowledges the substantial \$3.7 billion investment - including 5000 new residential aged care places a year over the next 4 years, streamlined financial hardship applications, and the removal of out-of-pocket expenses for showering, dressing and continence management at home – it falls critically short where older people need it most: getting assessed and Support at Home.

OPAN remains concerned that the following urgent aged care issues remain unresolved:

- Unacceptably long aged care assessment wait times: data published by the Productivity Commission earlier in the year revealed that the median time it took to receive an aged care assessment increased from 22 days to 27 days, and the time to commence services following a successful assessment was 245 days, up from 118 days.
- Inadequate number of Support at Home places being approved and with insufficient funding:
 - While the budget commits \$389.8 million to Support at Home refinements, it is unclear what portion is being attributed to new allocated places.
 - The continuation of the 60 per cent interim funding also risks older people cutting crucial services and not receiving the full care that they need.
- The Integrated Assessment Tool (IAT) algorithm, which determines an older person's eligibility and priority for government-funded aged care services, continues to put older people at risk. OPAN is disappointed that the call for clinical oversight has not been addressed and assessors remain unable to override decisions. We will await the outcomes of the review of the assessment tool.
- The \$224.3 million investment in dementia care – expanding specialist units and the Hospital to Aged Care Dementia Support Program – is welcomed, though more needs to be done to support people living with dementia to remain in the community.

OPAN Director Policy, Education and Systemic Advocacy Samantha Edmonds said the Budget is a missed opportunity to pursue meaningful reform.



“This is disappointing news for the sector and older people, especially since we have an ageing population, with more people projected to need government funded assistance going forward,” Ms Edmonds said.

“While removing out-of-pocket costs for some personal care services is a welcome move and will improve livelihoods, it’s one of many issues being continually raised by older people and advocates that requires urgent action.

“We cannot risk having older people be denied vital support or be forced to wait more than eight months for funding, because of red tape or a computer algorithm assessing their care needs incorrectly.

“Older people deserve to be valued and treated with dignity and respect, and unfortunately this Budget still leaves much uncertainty.

“We will continue to work alongside Government to advocate for change and champion the rights and wellbeing of older people.”

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When reporting about older people please refer to the [media reporting guidelines](#) and for more information or media enquiries visit our [Media Centre](#).

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO MEDIA FOR STORIES RELATING TO OLDER PEOPLE

It is critical to provide older people with an avenue to get support when covering stories about aged care. We strongly encourage you to include the following message in your story to enable older people to seek support:

For information or support regarding aged care, please call the Aged Care Advocacy Line on 1800 700 600 or visit open.org.au