

## Chat with us

Network member 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 classifications or services.

To find out more

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

Our services are free,  
independent and  
confidential



**aras**  
Aged Rights  
Advocacy Service

**Aged Rights Advocacy Service  
is the South Australian  
member of OPAN**

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**OPAN** | Older Persons  
★ ★ ★ Advocacy Network

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# News for You

**Aged care advocacy newsletter | June 2026 | Issue 14**



**Catherine Paxman, Aged Care Advocate**

## Supporting older people to speak up

'Advocacy is not about taking over, it's about walking beside someone.' For aged care advocate Catherine Paxman, this message is key to supporting older people to speak up for themselves. 'Advocates don't make decisions for people – they empower individuals with information and support them to express their wishes,' she said.

The right to access aged care advocacy is embedded in the Aged Care Act 2024, which reinforces that older people have the right to speak up and raise concerns without fear of repercussions. But many older people still feel unsure about speaking up.

Some fear losing services, being treated differently, or appearing unappreciative, Catherine said. 'When people feel safe, heard and informed, those barriers begin to lessen. Advocates give reassurance that someone is walking

alongside them, supporting their rights, choices and dignity.'

Catherine reflected on a time when she supported an older person experiencing a lack of financial transparency in their aged care to speak up. With Catherine's advocacy support, the older person lodged a complaint themselves with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, resulting in all outstanding fees being waived.

The most meaningful outcome was the older person's increased confidence, Catherine said. 'They felt heard, respected and empowered knowing their voice carried weight.'

Catherine encouraged older people to know their rights, ask questions, and remember that advocates are available for support. 'Advocacy can be a turning point from uncertainty to empowerment.'

## CASE STUDY

### June's story\*

June\*, who lives in a residential aged care home, contacted the Aged Care Advocacy Line after becoming concerned about pension deductions and a lack of financial transparency from her provider.

She had been asked to pay a lump sum on entry and provide her ATM card details. Over time, June became increasingly worried and confused, as she was not receiving any financial statements to show how her money was being managed.

With support from her family, June tried to get answers from her provider but was unable to get the information she

needed. Wanting to better understand her situation, she agreed to be connected with an Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) member financial advocate.

The financial advocate explained June's rights and introduced her to the OPAN Self-advocacy Toolkit - a resource designed to help older people stay informed, ask questions and speak up with confidence.

With the right information and support, June felt more confident to take action. She was able to raise her concerns directly with her provider and work towards resolving the issue.

June's story shows how access to the right support and information can make a real difference – helping older people build the confidence to speak up, ask questions and take an active role in decisions about their care.

\*Name changed for privacy



## Step-by-step guide to making yourself heard

### 1 What is the problem?

There can be many parts to a problem. Make a list of your issues before you make a phone call or go to a meeting. Being clear in your mind will help get results.

### 2 Know your rights

Knowing what you can reasonably expect from your aged care service provider is key. Start by familiarising yourself with the Statement of Rights.

### 3 What would you like to happen?

After making a list of issues, think about what you would like to achieve. Being clear about what you would like to happen will keep everyone focused on finding a solution.

### 4 Make a phone call or hold a meeting

Talk to someone who can make changes and work with you towards fixing the problem. You should ask for the manager or someone who handles complaints. Sometimes you need to meet face-to-face.

### 5 Keep check

If the changes or action you have agreed to have not been done, you will need to follow up. Call again and explain that you are not happy with the progress. Ask for an update or if you can speak to someone higher about the issue.

### Empowered to speak up

Frances Mulcahy, National Older Persons Reference Group member, speaks about what self-advocacy means to her...



#### What is self-advocacy?

'Self-advocacy for me is being and moving in the world in a way that stands up for our rights and interests, particularly in settings where there is an inbuilt power imbalance.'

#### Why is self-advocacy important to you?

'I am a member of a minority group that is quite often punished for being who we are. Advocating for my ordinary human rights helps others learn about the challenges I face. Being visible and advocating for the rights of transgender people assists my community.'

#### How do we learn self-advocacy?

'Before we can self-advocate, we need to be clear about our needs and informed of our rights. Self-advocacy can be as simple as wearing the clothes we like or asking others to listen and treat us as adults.'

#### What does self-advocacy look like for you?

'As an older transgender woman, simply being visible is a form of advocacy. Communicating clearly about the things that matter to me and insisting on being treated with dignity. If a situation doesn't feel safe to self-advocate – sharing the experience with an ally and exploring whether a formal complaint process is needed.'

#### What makes self-advocacy effective?

'Understanding your rights allows you to communicate what is fair. We don't have an endless supply of assertiveness, so being clear in our hearts and minds about what is important helps us focus our efforts. While it's nice to stand up for yourself at the moment of challenge, it's often possible to seek redress later when you have more capacity or a clearer view.'

## OPAN's Self-advocacy Toolkit

The Self-advocacy Toolkit booklet equips you with the information and resources you need to speak up for better aged care.

What's inside:

- a step-by-step guide to making yourself heard
- checklists to help you speak up for better in-home and residential care
- your options when leaving hospital
- tips for making an effective complaint.

Download our Self-advocacy Toolkit booklet in English or 14 other languages.



### Free information sessions for residents on:

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

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

**'You're not creating  
a problem by  
asking for what  
you need.'**

**– Jane Sullivan  
Financial advocate**



# Keep these numbers handy

**Aged Rights Advocacy Service**

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

**Legal Services Commission SA**

1300 366 424

**SA Health**

(08) 8226 6000



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.

## PUZZLE TIME

### WORD FINDER

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**RIGHTS**

**ADVOCATE**

**SUPPORT**

**SELF-ADVOCACY**

**DIGNITY**

**DECISIONS**

**RESOURCE**

**EMPOWER**

### SUDOKU

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**aras**  
Aged Rights  
Advocacy Service

South Australian member of the  
Older Persons Advocacy Network

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

[sa.agedrights.asn.au](http://sa.agedrights.asn.au)

★ ★ ★  
**OPAN** Older Persons  
★ ★ ★ Advocacy Network

OPAN is the national peak body for independent aged  
care 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**

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National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP).