

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



Darwin Community Legal Service
is the Northern Territory member
of OPAN



Visit open.org.au
or scan the
QR code



News for You

Aged care advocacy newsletter | June 2026 | Issue 14



Elina Beswick, Aged Care Advocate

Supporting older people to speak up

'Question things if they are unclear or don't feel right to you.'

For Darwin Community Legal Service seniors rights advocate Elina Beswick, this message is at the heart of supporting older people to feel confident to speak up.

'Self-advocacy starts with trusting your instincts but it also relies on having the right information and support to act on them', she said.

The right for older people to access aged care advocacy is now embedded in the Aged Care Act 2024. Elina hopes this gives older people greater confidence to reach out for support without fear of consequences.

'People often feel embarrassed - I always emphasise how complicated it all is and how much work advocates must do to stay on

top of it,' she said. But many older people still hesitate to speak up. Some older people say they don't want to rock the boat, and others feel like they're just lucky to have the services that they do. There was also a fear among those in remote areas that there is no alternative if they 'make a fuss'.

Elina encouraged older people to self-advocate by asking questions, asking for communication in writing, seeking clarity, and keeping records.

'Knowledge is power. You have a right to understand what is going on with your own care.'

For those feeling unsure, reaching out to an advocate could be a turning point, she said.

'With the right support, older people can move from uncertainty to empowerment.'

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 700600

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

– Jane Sullivan,
Financial advocate



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.

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



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

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

RIGHTS

ADVOCATE

SUPPORT

SELF-ADVOCACY

DIGNITY

DECISIONS

RESOURCE

EMPOWER

SUDOKU

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

3		4	
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1	3	2	4
4		3	

2	3		1
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3	1	2	4
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**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



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

opan.org.au

Aged Care Advocacy Line

1 800 700 600

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