

Chat with us

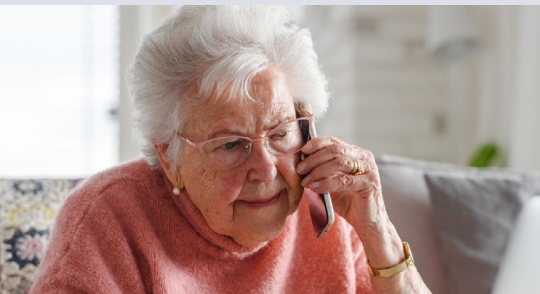
Network member aged care advocates can provide information and support on a range of different issues, including:

- ☐ 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**



**Elder Rights
Australia**

Promoting the human rights of all older people

**Elder Rights Australia is the
Victorian member of OPAN**

OPAN | Older Persons
Advocacy Network

Visit open.org.au
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QR code



News for You

Aged care advocacy newsletter | June 2026 | Issue 14



Melitta Zobec, Elder Rights Australia

Supporting older people to speak up

'We can lead, we can walk beside and we can walk behind but older people and their families don't need to walk alone.' For Elder Rights Australia advocate Melitta Zobec, this is what independent advocacy is all about.

'Advocacy gives a voice to people who might be hesitant to ask questions, raise concerns or follow up issues,' she said.

The right to access aged care advocacy is embedded in the Aged Care Act 2024. But many older people still hesitate to speak up.

'This can be due to not wanting to get someone in trouble, communication or cultural barriers, or past negative experiences. In regional towns, some older people fear that complaining may mean they have to move to a residential home far away from family and friends.'

Melitta's advice to older people was simple: 'knowledge is power'.

'Ensure you know your rights, ask questions, keep records, and feel free to call an advocacy service. Aged care is complex – I've worked in aged care for 19 years and I learn new things every day.'

In Victoria, there are advocates all over the state, from Mildura to Warrnambool, across to Gippsland and everywhere in between.

'Being local makes a big difference . . . people usually relax and go, "ok - you're human, you're local, you get it, I can trust you're looking out for me!"'

Each advocacy case was different but, ultimately, the goal was the same - empowerment for the older person, Melitta said.

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.

Q&A

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
Elder Rights Australia



Keep these numbers handy

Elder Rights Advocacy
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

Victorian Department of Health
1300 650 172

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
SELFADVOCACY

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.

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1	3	2	4
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			3

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1	4	3	
	3	4	

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.



Elder Rights Australia

Promoting the human rights of all older people

Victorian member of the Older Persons Advocacy Network

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

elderrights.org.au | Email: admin@era.asn.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

OPAN is funded by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing through the National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP).