

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, 11 September 2026

OPAN WELCOMES PROTECTIONS FOR EXISTING AGED CARE RESIDENTS, SEEKS CLARITY ON HIGHER EVERYDAY LIVING FEE

The Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) welcomes the Federal Government's decision to protect existing aged care residents from being charged a Higher Everyday Living Fee (HELFF) for services they previously received at no additional cost, but says concerns remain for new residents.

HELFF is an optional fee for extra services that go beyond the standard care and services every resident is entitled to.

It was introduced under the *Aged Care Act 2024* to replace previous Extra Service Fee and Additional Service Fee arrangements, from 1 November 2025.

The government has announced changes that will prevent residential aged care providers from charging residents a HELFF fee for services they were receiving for free before 1 November.

OPAN Director Policy, Education and Systemic Advocacy, Samantha Edmonds, said the changes provide important protection for existing residents but do not resolve broader concerns about HELFF.

"This is a positive step for older people who entered residential aged care before 1 November and provides important protection against being charged for services they were already receiving," Ms Edmonds said.

"However, it does little to address the uncertainty facing older people who entered, or will enter, residential aged care after that date.

"While these changes provide greater certainty for existing residents, they do not establish a clearer boundary between what is considered standard aged care and what can legitimately be charged as a HELFF.

"OPAN continues to hear concerns about HELFF charges relating to services many older people reasonably expect to be part of everyday residential aged care, including televisions, access to basic internet and food options.

"We remain concerned that by excluding new residents from access to what should be provided services, such as in-room TVs and WiFi, the new rights-based Act won't be able to deliver on its intent and HELFF risks creating a two-tiered aged care system, where quality of life may depend on an older person's ability to pay rather than genuine choice.

"OPAN is not opposed to optional extras in aged care. However, they should never become a barrier to necessary care, dignity or informed choice.

“It is pleasing to see media reports that some providers are refunding older people for being unfairly charged for extra services since 1 November 2025. OPAN would like to see all older people offered similar refunds where they were incorrectly charged for services. This should be done by either the provider acting in good faith, or through action by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

“We will continue to monitor this matter closely to ensure the rights of older people are realised in practice.”

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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 opan.org.au