

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 17 September 2026

PROPOSED CHANGES TO AGED CARE ASSESSMENT TOOL WELCOMED, BUT LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS STILL NEEDED

The Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) welcomes the tabling of an amendments bill in Parliament today establishing an escalation pathway for older people in exceptional circumstances where there are disputes over decisions made by the aged care Integrated Assessment Tool (IAT).

The IAT uses an online algorithm to determine funding levels for older people under the Support at Home program and has been the subject of ongoing concerns raised by older people, advocates and sector stakeholders.

OPAN CEO Craig Gear welcomed the legislative move but warned that further work is needed to resolve longstanding concerns with the IAT.

“OPAN has been advocating for an escalation pathway, and we are pleased that these calls have been heard, with the amendments bill tabled today,” Mr Gear said.

“The IAT algorithm is a significant concern for older people, especially since it determines a person’s level of aged care funding and impacts their livelihood.

“While further reform remains essential, older people need a mechanism to challenge decisions now. This escalation pathway provides an important interim solution to ensure that older people get the right care at the right time.

“OPAN continues to call for clinical oversight of IAT decisions. These assessments go to the core of an older person’s dignity and the supports they receive, so it is crucial that a human element remains when it comes to decision-making or reviews.”

Mr Gear pointed to concerns in the operational implementation of the escalation pathway. To begin the process, consent needs to be received from the older person.

“OPAN is concerned that the proposed 7-day timeframe may not always allow enough time for this to occur, particularly for older people who live in rural and remote areas, or those who may want to seek advocacy support.

“The current consent process for reviewable decisions has demonstrated administrative challenges of obtaining written consent from the older person. Consideration should be given to what is required in writing and what can be given verbally.

“OPAN is concerned that if the older person doesn’t respond with consent within the 7 days – this effectively acts as a block, and they may miss out on the escalation review, particularly those in rural and remote locations.

“The details of this escalation pathway will be determined in the Rules, which OPAN looks forward to seeing once they’re established.

“As the Rules are developed, OPAN would like to see consideration given to consent arrangements, appropriate timeframes, and broad criteria that allows people to be considered via this escalation pathway.

“OPAN will continue to work closely with the Government on the details of this escalation pathway and will continue to advocate for longer term solutions.”

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