MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 28 October 2026

OMBUDSMAN REPORT REINFORCES CRITICAL NEED FOR HUMAN OVERRIDE IN AGED CARE ASSESSMENTS

The Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) has welcomed the findings of the Commonwealth Ombudsman's report into the aged care assessment system, saying it reinforces the need for greater human override and should inform the independent review announced by the government.

OPAN Director Policy, Education and Systemic Advocacy Samantha Edmonds said the report validates concerns that older people, families and advocates have raised consistently with us about the Integrated Assessment Tool (IAT).

"Older people deserve to have the confidence that aged care assessments accurately reflect their individual circumstances and care needs," Ms Edmonds said.

"OPAN has continued to hear from older people, families and advocates about situations where assessment outcomes did not align with an older person's actual needs, resulting in delayed access to the right level of care and support.

"The Ombudsman's findings highlight the risks when decisions that have a significant impact on an older person's health, independence and wellbeing cannot be immediately reviewed by an experienced assessor.

"Assessments determine the supports an older person can access and, ultimately, their ability to remain safe and independent at home. It is critical that there are appropriate safeguards when those decisions do not accurately reflect an older person's care needs."

Ms Edmonds said OPAN welcomed the Ombudsman's recommendations, including measures to strengthen human override of assessment decisions, and looked forward to contributing to the independent review of the IAT announced this month.

"OPAN has consistently called for a human override mechanism in assessment decisions and welcomed recent reforms establishing an escalation pathway for exceptional circumstances.

"While the escalation pathway provides an important mechanism to address individual cases in exceptional circumstances, the independent review provides an opportunity to address and respond to the underlying issues identified by the Ombudsman.

"Older people deserve confidence that assessments will result in the right level of care and support when they need it."

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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