

MEDIA RELEASE

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PEAK BODY FOR OLDER PEOPLE CAUTIOUSLY WELCOMES IMPROVED ASSESSMENT PATHWAY

The Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) has welcomed the release of the proposed Aged Care Rules and an amendments Bill in Parliament which improve the rights and protections for older people.

OPAN CEO Craig Gear OAM said the Bill contains an escalation pathway regarding the Integrated Assessment Tool (IAT) which is critically important to ensure the algorithm doesn't cause unintended harm.

"It's vital that older people have confidence they'll get the right support through these amendments, and have protections around the algorithm and automated decision making," Mr Gear said.

"The algorithm may not understand an individual's unique circumstances and high-risk needs.

"While our preference is to put human oversight back into the hands of assessment services, it is vital that a pathway for human override occurs this year.

"The Parliament needs to ensure that the escalation pathway is timely and open enough for people to get the care they need and deserve at the right time.

"Further work needs to happen on the algorithm to ensure it is responsive to their true needs and at the initial point of assessment. We will closely monitor the use and effectiveness of this escalation pathway to provide evidence for further reform if required.

"This is not a time to politicise this issue, we need Parliament to put the best interests of older people first."

Mr Gear was pleased to see that an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Commissioner is also being enshrined permanently with these amendments, noting the system has for too long not provided equitable access and culturally safe care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

"Having a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Commissioner would greatly improve the quality and availability when entering the aged care system."

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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