MEDIA RELEASE

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SENATE REPORT CONFIRMS AGED CARE DEFICIENCIES

The Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) has welcomed the Senate Community Affairs References Committee's interim report into the Support at Home program, continuing the call for further government intervention.

OPAN CEO Craig Gear OAM noted that the Senate Inquiry report echoes many of the concerns raised in OPAN's 2026 Presenting Issues report, with both identifying a system struggling to provide the right care at the right time, and at the right price.

Importantly, the Committee found the Support at Home program is falling short of its core objective of helping older people remain safely at home and called for a renewed focus on prevention and early intervention.

The report also highlights the impact of delayed support on hospital admissions, premature entry into residential aged care and growing pressure on unpaid carers.

"This interim report confirms just how challenging the aged care environment is right now," Mr Gear said.

"The report rightly recognises that delays to assessment and support are not administrative problems. They have real consequences for older people's health, independence and ability to remain living at home.

"We acknowledge there have been some improvements in wait times for those who need urgent care, but many people are still waiting too long to get the support they need.

"And the longer older people wait for intervention, the faster their health and wellbeing will deteriorate.

"We know the system is under strain, but we cannot continue to see report after report say the same thing – we need the government to meet its promised three-month waiting time for all services in the home."

OPAN remains concerned about several aspects of the Support at Home program, including:

- The time it takes to get an assessment at the right level and service commencement for the person's individual needs, and the inaccurate assessments of the Integrated Assessment Tools algorithm.

- Unreasonable prices charged for clinical care and other supports now that personal care is fully covered by the government.
- The indexation of Support at Home classification levels have not kept pace with inflation, or the price increases from providers.
- The use of Minimum Service Offering funding provision which only allows 60% of a package to be delivered and no definitive time frame for when the full package will be provided. This does not allow the older person or the provider to plan for when care will be available at the level the person has been assessed for.
- Delays to approval and access to assistive technology and home modifications (AT-HM) and the inadequacies of individual funding allocations.

Mr Gear acknowledged the federal government's efforts to improve the system over the past 12 months, but noted there is a long way to go.

"The focus needs to shift from transactional care. This was never the intent of Support at Home reforms. The focus must be on ensuring older people are provided with person-centered care," Mr Gear said.

"We still do not have a reasonable pricing framework in effect, nor do we have the price caps the government committed to. These must be priorities in the coming year.

"Older people's rights under the new Aged Care Act will not translate into their day-to-day experience unless we get these reforms right.

"OPAN will continue to work with the government to ensure the voices of older people are at the centre of ongoing reform."

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