



OPAN Annual Report 2020–2021

Raising the voice of people accessing aged care



Contents

Chairperson’s Report	4
A Message from the CEO	6
What we do and who we are	10
The Older Persons Advocacy Network	11
Strategic Directions	12
Seniors Rights Service, New South Wales Network Member	14
Aged Rights Advocacy Service, South Australia Network Member	15
Charter of Aged Care Rights	18
What is Aged Care Advocacy?	20
Financial Year 2020 – 2021 Statistics	21-23
Media Mentions and Appearances	24
OPAN Projects 2020-2021	26-47
Our People	48-55

Welcome to our 2020-2021 Annual Report

Across Australia, there’s a network of independent non-profit organisations giving a voice to older people at every stage of their aged care experience.

Nationally, these organisations come together as members of the Older Persons Advocacy Network, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, to deliver the National Aged Care Advocacy Program. We aim to improve access to aged care advocacy for older people across Australia, create a society that hears older people, and where they are respected and can exercise their rights.

We strive to be a dynamic organisation that builds on and learns from our collective history to provide the best support to older people that we can. We have continued to grow in the past year, hiring experienced professionals to join our team, expanding our work plan and increasing our influence in the aged care sector to become Australia’s peak body for individual aged care advocacy support.



opan.org.au | 1800 700 600

Disclaimer: OPAN and OPAN’s nine Service Delivery Organisation accept no legal responsibility for this publication’s contents. To the fullest extent allowed by law, OPAN, the nine OPAN Service Delivery Organisations and their representatives exclude all liability in respect of the information and opinions expressed in this publication.



Chairperson's Report



Mary Anne Hunt

Our message this year continues to be the same as last, and it's non-negotiable.

"Transformational change of the aged care system with human rights at its core."

In March 2021, the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety handed down its Final Report – Care, Dignity and Respect, which provided 148 broad-ranging recommendations for the fundamental and systemic reform of the aged care system. OPAN calls for fundamental and systemic aged care transformation because the many reforms have resulted in system failure over the last 30 years. These system failures have resulted in the continued neglect and abuse of many older Australians who access aged and community care services, as documented in the Royal Commission's report.

We acknowledge the Australian Government's response to the Royal Commission and the former highlighted that "respect for senior Australians is, and must be, a national priority". Notably, several of the recommendations were accepted. OPAN will hold the government to account to ensure all recommendations are enacted and fully implemented to enable older Australians to enjoy their fundamental human rights and freedoms when accessing aged care services.

During this reporting period, OPAN and its nine-member organisations have continued to work very hard to bring the voice of older Australians to government and service providers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The impact of the pandemic for many older people accessing residential aged care services across Australia has been harrowing. Many have been locked away, denied access to their family, friends and community for over 18 months. Government and service providers can no longer hide behind the rhetoric of "keeping older Australians safe" because the lived experience demonstrates something completely different throughout the pandemic. We encourage government and service providers to work with OPAN and our partners to listen, seek to understand, and act on the voices of older Australians as we learn to live in a world with COVID-19.

In the coming months, it will be necessary for OPAN and our partners to ensure that older Australians forced into isolation during the pandemic are supported to reconnect and stay connected to their family, friends and community. In addition, we will continue to advocate with older Australians to ensure their voices are heard, that systemic issues impacting their lives are addressed by government, service providers and other agencies responsible for aged and community care services across Australia.

OPAN achievements over the past year are the result of many individuals working together to support older Australian's human rights. On behalf of the Board, I want to thank everyone for their contribution. Our collective contribution is what makes this organisation extraordinary.

To our Older Persons Reference Group members, thank you for your leadership, wisdom, advice and most importantly, your trust to stand with and support you.

To our OPAN partners, thank you for all your support, the opportunities we have had to learn, grow and influence change one issue at a time. Finally, to our CEO, team and Board colleagues (past and present), thank you for your unwavering commitment to supporting older people's human rights in aged care.

In the words of Nelson Mandela:

"What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others".



A Message from the CEO



Craig Gear OAM

OPAN has continued to grow from strength to strength this year, despite the impacts and challenges of COVID-19.

I would like to start by formally acknowledging the work of each and every aged care

advocate across the country. Thank you for your commitment, time, passion, and endless support for older people across Australia. Your daily work and hard slog means that older people have a better experience of aged care, are safer, and have their rights upheld.

At the beginning of the pandemic, OPAN chose to continue the establishment of the National Older Persons Reference Group (NOPRG) even though we could not meet as a group together in person. The 36 members of NOPRG have continued to meet every second month, and have quickly got the handle of zoom meetings (as we have all had to do during COVID-19-19). NOPRG have been invaluable in guiding OPAN's policy work and systemic advocacy. Thanks to each and every member of the group for your contribution. And thanks for continuing to challenge OPAN and myself to ensure that older people's voices are heard and older people are able to speak for themselves – the old adage runs true, *"nothing about us without us"*.

We have moved strongly this year, despite COVID-19, to continue our journey to national consistency. You will see in this report the great work that has been done to provide peer support to our approximately 80 advocates across the country, the work we've done around improving the quality of our data through our minimum data set, and work on consistent advocacy practice guidelines and

national advocacy standards. The advocates who participated in the national meetings spoke positively of the experience and stated that they love having the opportunity to network and learn together with their peers. We will continue to support these professional development opportunities in 2022. Thank you to the OPAN Operations NACAP Team and our member organisations that have supported and facilitated this work throughout 2020/21.

A lot of the work of OPAN as the national peak for individual aged care advocacy, is to raise awareness of the role and value of the aged care advocate. This was demonstrated in the Curtin University report on the knowledge, skills and attributes of the aged care advocate, and documented in the OPAN aged care advocate capability statement. The capability of the aged care advocate consists of knowledge of the aged care system, the ability to listen and negotiate, and the partisan support of the older person's human rights. Aged care advocates show a commitment to walk alongside the older person, taking direction from the person, and ensuring the older person's voice is heard and responded to. This is unique to this highly valuable, but often not recognised profession.

We are glad that the government and the Royal Commission recognised the value of aged care advocacy and are seeking to grow OPAN National Aged Care Advocacy Program and expand its functions.

The other role that OPAN plays is raising awareness – awareness of the availability of, and access pathways to aged care advocacy, along with the broad responsibility of aged care providers and the aged care workforce to respect and uphold the rights of older people. I'm extremely proud of the work of our communications, marketing and education

unit, along with the communications personnel in each of our member organisations, in thinking innovatively to pivot during COVID-19 and to still get the message about advocacy and rights out there despite the constraints of COVID-19. Our webinars are recognised as the gold standard in their field – being focused on older people and their information needs.

This year saw OPAN partner with the ABC to deliver an impact campaign built around the second series of *'Old People's Home for Four-year-olds'*. The challenge had been placed on myself by Val Fell, a member of the NOPRG, to find a way to reach older people who may not be connecting through digital channels. The words of Val rung in my mind saying, *"it's all right all of this digital stuff. How do you reach the person down the road that doesn't have a computer or a smart phone, isn't online, but is socially isolated and needs OPAN's support?"*.

"Everyone has worked hard to support older people through the traumatic time of COVID-19 and restrictions. It's now time to move to an environment where older people have the right to reconnect with family, friends and society. And now is the time for us to transform the aged care system to a human rights-based approach with services centred around the voice and needs of older people. It is the role of our advocates to bring out that voice and amplify it. This will be vital in 2022"



A Message from the CEO (continued)

The Stay Connected and Supported in Your Community initiative and partnership with ABC was born out of Val throwing down that gauntlet! I look forward to you reading about the results of the project and looking at the materials which supported the campaign at opan.org.au/stayconnected

This annual report is provided in the ongoing context of the COVID-19 pandemic and recognises the incredible impact community movement and visitation restrictions have had on older people receiving aged care both in their home and in aged care homes. I am a member of the AHPPC Aged Care Advisory Group and we have now met over 70 times to consider and advise on what was needed to prevent outbreaks, how to protect older people in age care from the significant health risks and impacts of COVID-19, all the while supporting older people to have their right to choice, control over their lives and freedom to connect with families and friends. These have been difficult and competing priorities which needed to be balanced.

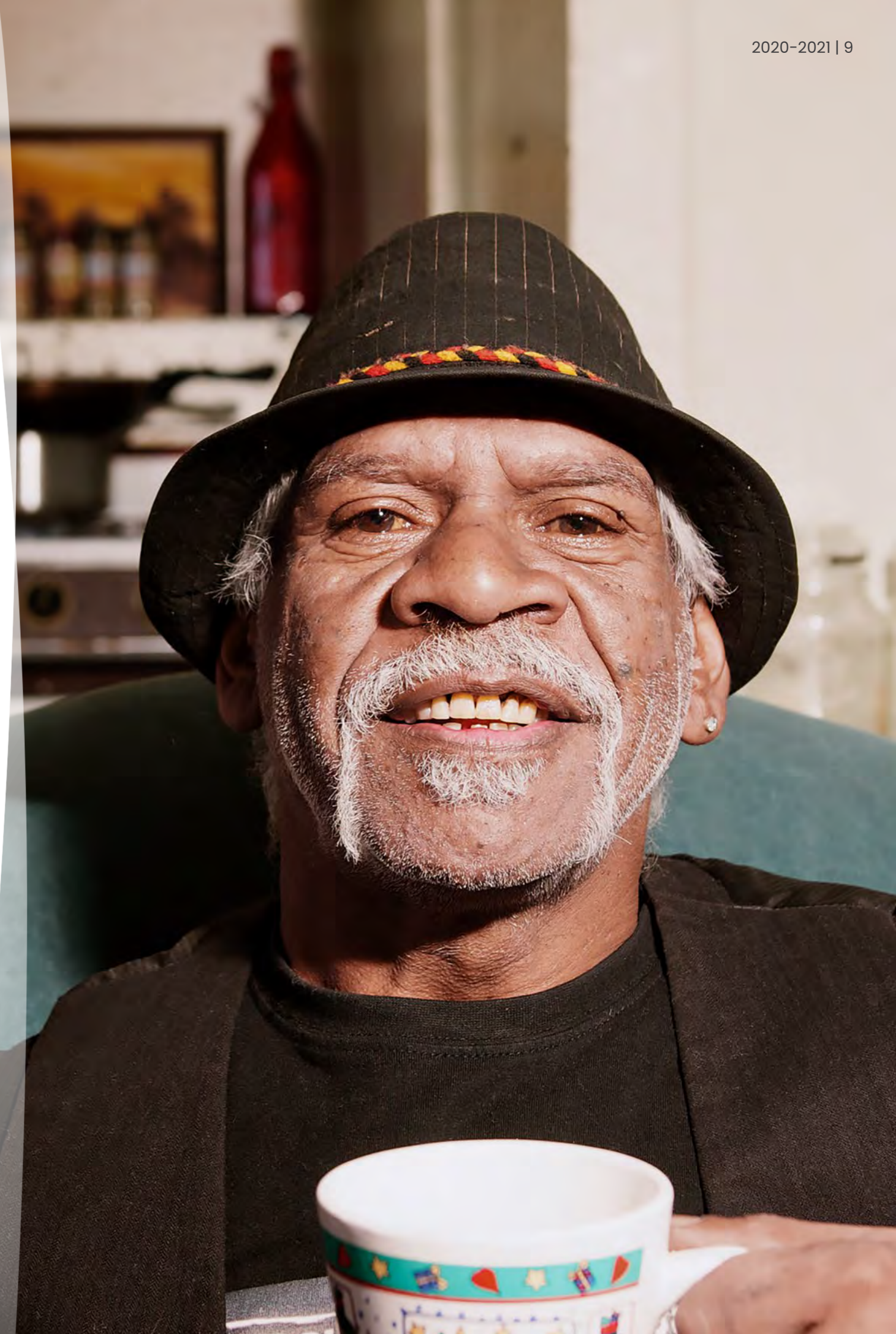
OPAN has been involved in the delivery of the Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line, provided cross-state responses to COVID-19 outbreaks through our nine member organisations, and contributed to more appropriate policy and operational responses surrounding visitation restrictions. We now need to move to a time where older people can reconnect with family and friends as they did prior to COVID-19. It is their right, and it is our responsibility as Australian citizens to ensure this can happen safely. OPAN has contributed to the development and promotion of the Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes during COVID-19, alongside many other

organisations. While not perfect, the 'Code' has seen a more nuanced and proportionate response to visitation in aged care homes occur. It is vital that older people are allowed to reconnect, as every other citizen can. This will promote their social, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

OPAN welcomed the final report of the *Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety*, and also importantly the Australian Government's response and increased funding for aged care in the May 2021 federal budget. OPAN is committed to doing all it can to bring forward the voice of older people into transforming the aged system into one that focuses on the human rights of every older person and embeds these into a new Aged Care Act. The transformation journey continues and we will work with government to build the aged care system for the future and fix the current access and care quality issues.

Finally, I would like to thank the OPAN staff, OPAN member organisation CEOs, their staff and the OPAN Board. Your commitment is unwavering, ensuring the voice of older people is heard, is respected and listened to. You continue to enable more people to know that there is someone out there to support them and that they have human rights that **MUST** to be respected. Thank you for that ongoing commitment.

I look forward to supporting you in the expansion of the OPAN National Aged Care Advocacy Program, leading the work of OPAN as the national peak body for individual advocacy support, contributing to systemic advocacy in aged care, and promoting rights of older people into 2022.



What we do and who we are

What we do

Our network members provide free, confidential, and independent support to older people seeking or receiving Australian Government-funded aged care services, their families, and representatives across the country.

Older people are at the centre of everything we do and stand for. Together, we help older people understand and exercise their aged care rights, seek aged care services that suit their needs and find solutions to issues they may be experiencing with their aged care provider.

At a national level, we raise the voices of older people with governments, aged care providers and sector stakeholders to advance aged care reforms so that older people have a positive aged care experience. We write submissions to Royal Commissions, Senate and parliamentary inquiries. We participate in consultations and forums, develop responses to government policies and oversee our network to ensure national consistency in what we do.

OPAN's Vision

A society where older people are heard, informed and respected and where they are aware of advocacy and enjoy and exercise their rights.

OPAN's Purpose

To facilitate an environment that promotes the rights of older people and the ability for all older Australians to live well and be respected.

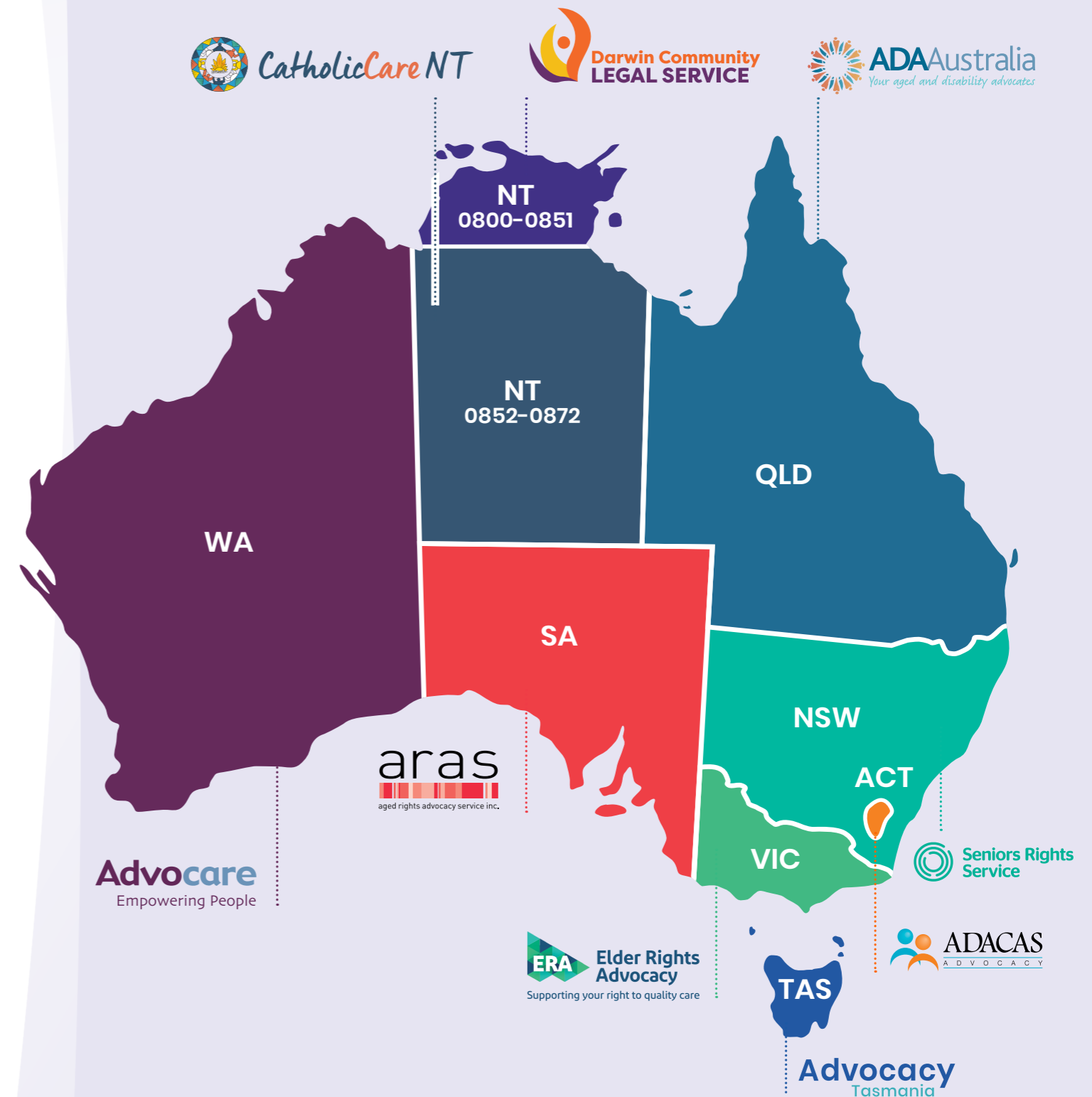
What Inspires and Guides us

Our network plays a vital role in promoting older people's ability to exercise their human rights and the rights they are entitled to under the Charter of Aged Care Rights. We focus on supporting older people to understand and exercise their rights and for their families, friends, carers and aged care providers to recognise, respect and uphold their rights.

Who we are

The Older Persons Advocacy Network is the national peak for individual aged care advocacy support. Our nine member organisations cover every state and territory and every year they help thousands of older people to work through issues with their aged care services in their own homes and in aged care homes.

The Older Persons Advocacy Network



Strategic Directions

This year OPAN developed a new five year strategic plan, which was unanimously endorsed by the OPAN Board and members. Key elements of the strategic plan and our key areas of focus are outlined here.

Our Focus:

Champion older people's human rights, embrace diversity, and prevent abuse

Strategic Directions

Strategic Direction 1: Advance the human rights of older people, particularly those seeking and receiving aged care, and the most vulnerable.

Strategic Direction 2: Improve advocacy and support for older people with diverse needs.

Strategic Direction 3: Provide information and advocacy support to prevent the abuse of older people, including those receiving aged care.

Our Focus:

Expand and innovate aged care advocacy

Strategic Directions

Strategic Direction 4: Expand service reach and develop innovative advocacy models grounded in individual needs and human rights.

Our Focus:

Enhance quality, data, and the voice of older people

Strategic Directions

Strategic Direction 5: Embed advocacy quality standards and assurance across OPAN systems and services.

Strategic Direction 6: Enhance information and knowledge management to increase the impact of systemic advocacy.

Our Focus:

Drive operational improvement and impact

Strategic Directions

Strategic Direction 7: Enhance OPAN's effectiveness as the peak body for older person's individual advocacy.



Member Profiles

Each year we profile the work of two of our member organisations and the exceptional work of the aged care advocates.

Seniors Rights Service, New South Wales Network Member

Seniors Rights Service has supported and empowered older people across New South Wales since 1986 and is the state's largest community rights-based provider of aged care advocacy, legal services and information. It supports older people to understand and exercise their rights, with advocates in Sydney, Western Sydney, the Illawarra, Northern Rivers, North Coast, South Coast, Riverina and Orana Far West, allowing for reach across the state.

In the 2020/21 financial year, Seniors Rights Service responded to 5,232 aged care advocacy enquiries and delivered 521 free education sessions to aged care homes and home care recipients and professionals. During the COVID-19 outbreak in Sydney's Northern Beaches, the team responded to increased enquiries from people receiving aged care in their own home and aged care homes and their families.

Shannon Wright was appointed Chief Executive Officer in February 2020, bringing new ideas and opportunities to the organisation and helping the response to COVID-19 outbreaks and the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety's Final Report.

Lucy Letner, Seniors Rights Service Advocate



Lucy joined the Seniors Rights Service advocacy team in December 2020 to support culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Western Sydney, the most multicultural region in New South Wales. She provides support and information to individuals and free education sessions to aged care homes and community groups, continuing with online delivery during COVID-19 restrictions. Lucy believes education and empowering older people to self-advocate are critical drivers of change, evident after delivering education sessions.

"I am an immigrant, and English is my second language. My background helps me empathize with the people I speak to and understand the challenges they face. This year was one of the most memorable years of my life because as an advocate, I felt I had a true purpose and joined the right team at the right time."



Senior Rights Service advocates meeting before stay at home measures were in place.

Member Profiles

Aged Rights Advocacy Service, South Australia Network Member

In the 2020/21 financial year, Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS) provided advocacy and information support to 3,837 callers and delivered 418 free education sessions to aged care homes, community organisations and hospitals. When five aged care homes received a Sanction and Notice to Agree this year from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, ARAS provided extensive support to older people and their representatives, attending their meetings with management and ensuring their rights were respected and protected.

In June, its team of specialist Aboriginal advocates delivered the Respect Intergenerational Elders and Youth gathering in Port Lincoln. The meeting brought Elders and young people together in a culturally appropriate environment, with support from the local health service, council, aged care homes and colleges. The team celebrated a win this year when Anne Burgess, Chair of its Board of Directors, was recognised in the Australia Day 2021 Honours list and appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for her significant service to mental health, gender equality and older people. Currently, ARAS is participating in the Aged Care System Navigator Trial in the northern Adelaide, Gawler and Barossa regions, supporting older people to navigate the aged care system and access services.



Doris Gioffre, Aged Rights Advocacy Service Advocate



As Operations Supervisor, Doris oversees the operations team and assists with complex advocacy cases, facilitating weekly reflective practice sessions and managing the team's increasing workload. Since joining the team in 2002, Doris has been the subject matter expert on preventing the abuse of older people, developing and facilitating the delivery of training to aged care and allied health professionals covering the prevention of abuse of older people. Doris strongly believes in supporting the rights of older people and is committed to providing a high-quality advocacy service to ensure older people's voices are heard. She has a keen interest in innovation and positive legislative changes in the aged care sector to give older people more choices and enable them to exercise their preferences.

"Our workplace culture is one of inclusion and empathy, and we all support one another when needed. ARAS is very accommodating to staff and provides a good work-life balance."



ARAS System Navigator at an expo talking about how to access My Aged Care



Charter of Aged Care Rights

As an older person, I have a right to ...

1. Safe and high-quality care and services
2. Be treated with dignity and respect
3. Have my identity, culture and diversity valued and supported
4. Live without abuse and neglect
5. Be informed about my care and services in a way I understand
6. Access all information about myself, including information about their rights, care and services
7. Have control over and make choices about my care, and personal and social life, including where choices involve personal risk
8. Have control over, and make decisions about, the personal aspects of my daily life, financial affairs and possessions
9. My independence
10. Be listened to and understood
11. Have a person of my choice, including an aged care advocate, support me or speak on my behalf
12. Complain free from reprisal, and to have my complaints dealt with fairly and promptly;
13. Personal privacy and to have my personal information protected;
14. Exercise my rights without it adversely affecting the way I am treated.



What is Aged Care Advocacy?

Getting support or advice to seek out aged care services for the first time, or to work through issues with providers as they arise, helps older people to keep their independence and stay in control of our lives.

Together, we help older people understand and exercise their aged care rights, seek aged care services that suit their needs and find solutions to issues they may be experiencing with their aged care provider.

For example, we can help an older person to make informed decisions about the care

experience they want, address issues that impact their ability to live independently in their own home, switch between services, and talk to their provider.

We call this aged care advocacy, and it is carried out by our national team of aged care advocates.

We offer free, independent and confidential support and information to older people seeking or already using Australian Government-funded aged care services across the country, along with their families and carers.



In Financial Year 2020 – 2021, OPAN and its Members Provided:



Individual Advocacy
23,019

occasions of information or advocacy support to older people. This is a 11% increase from last year.



Elder abuse support
2,344

occasions of support to older people at risk of or experiencing elder abuse.



Education
2,603

education sessions (advocacy and older person abuse prevention) across both residential aged care facilities and home care recipients. This is a 20% increase from last year.



Webinars
73,406

views of the 31 webinars produced. This was a 106% growth from last year.

“This was my first OPAN webinar. I am very impressed. The panel members are extremely knowledgeable on the topic and able to present the information in a way that was easy for me to understand. The host was very engaging and made a wonderful effort at involving all of the panel members. I feel much more confident to make an informed decision after attending this webinar.”

- Anonymous

Older People in Australia Today

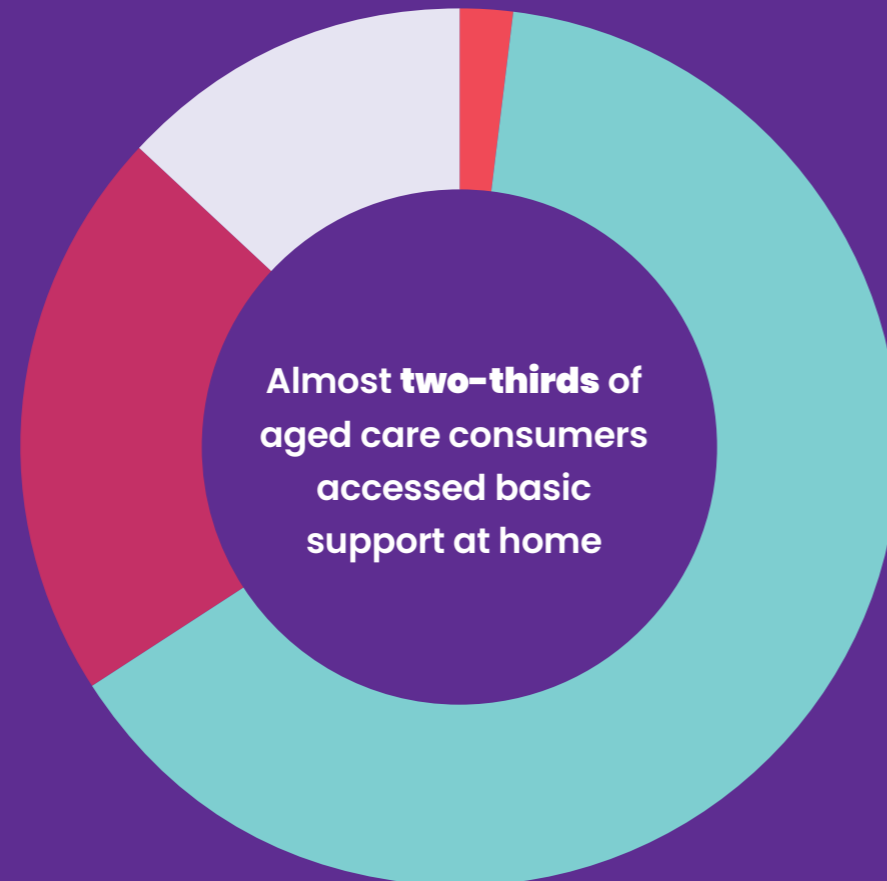
The Australian population is ageing. As the figures below indicate, in the last twenty years the number of older Australians aged over 65 and younger than 85 has grown by 28% and even more interesting is the number of older Australians aged over 85 has grown by 55%. Most older Australians spent much of their lives nurturing younger Australians. It is now time for us to provide them with the support they need. This is what OPAN aims to do.

	Proportion of population aged 65 and over	
	Aged 65-84	Aged 85 and over
2000	11.10	1.32
2005	11.45	1.50
2010	11.80	1.75
2015	12.95	1.97
2020	14.24	2.05

Older People in our Aged Care System

In 2019-20, over 1.3 million people received some form of aged care. Through the OPAN member organisations 1.8% of people receiving or considering aged care services were provided advocacy support, information and education in the 2021 financial year.

This graph indicates that almost three-quarters of aged care consumers received aged care support in their own homes, whereas only one-fifth received residential care.



- Basic Support at Home
- Residential Care
- Home Care
- Restorative Care

Social Media

In preparation for the significant expansion of the network in the upcoming years, the OPAN Communications and Marketing team worked tirelessly this year to build awareness of the network and the services we provide to older people. This is demonstrated by our significant growth in social media, electronic newsletter readers and Mailchimp subscribers. This work is supported and amplified by the regular communications and social media activities of our nine member organisations.



The National Advocate
OPAN's quarterly electronic newsletter

28,036

subscribers in 2021. This is a 112% increase from last year.



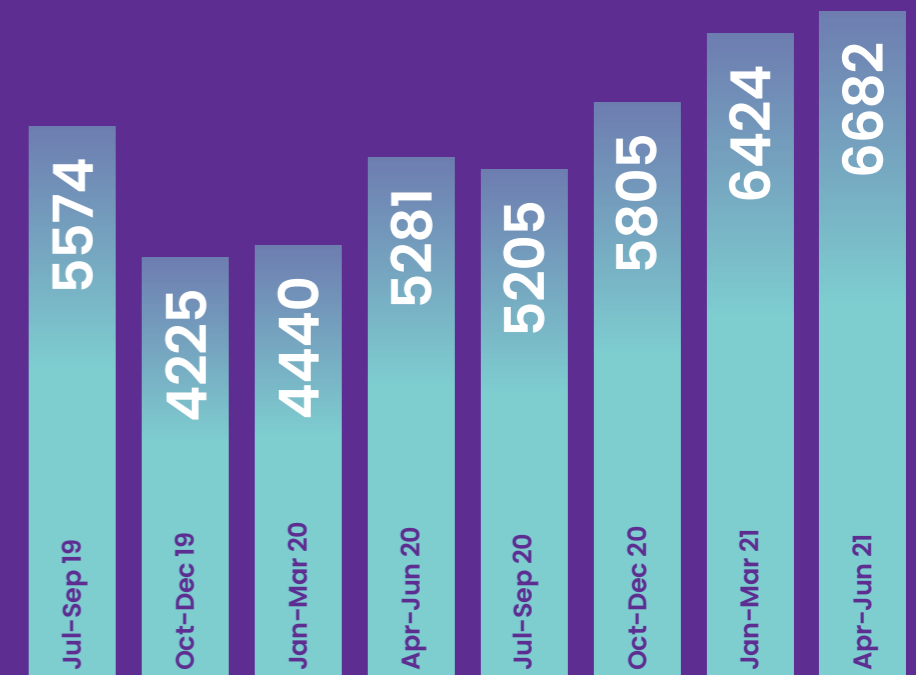
Facebook

3,075

followers in 2021. This is a 112% increase from last year.

Demand for Advocacy - Calls to 1800 700 600

As this graph indicates, demand for aged care advocacy continues to grow significantly. Last financial year saw a 24% increase in calls to our main national advocacy phone number. Each of those callers were supported by one of our member organisations. In addition, our member organisations report that cases are becoming more complex and time consuming. Coupled with increased calls, this means that our advocates are kept very busy.



Media Mentions and Appearances

It's been a big year of growth for the Older Persons Advocacy Network's public media profile, with more print, digital, radio and television interviews than ever before. Older people, their families and representatives need to know OPAN and its members are here to support them. Growing our media presence is also vital for the organisation's positioning as Australia's peak body for individual aged care advocacy and supports expanded reach to older

people. We are primarily represented in the press by OPAN CEO Craig Gear, however, regularly we put forward members of the National Older Persons Reference Group to share their lived experience, in addition to network member organisation CEOs. This work is supported and amplified by the regular media activities of our nine member organisations.

Older people want those caring for them to be 'fully vaccinated'.

Craig Gear appearing on Sky News, June 1, 2020.

Is it still OK for aged care facilities to restrict visitors because of the COVID-19 pandemic while the rest of Australia opens up?

ABC Investigations, 11 Dec 2020.

Budget 2021: Staying put – it's a matter of choice.

Val Fell appearing in The Australian newspaper, 15 May 2021

Aged Care Lifeline.

Nine News Melbourne, 12 May 2021.

Bouquets and brickbats: Victorians deliver their verdict on the budget.

Betty Huggins appearing in The Age, May 11, 2021.

Advocates seek assurance aged care residents won't come under vaccine pressure.

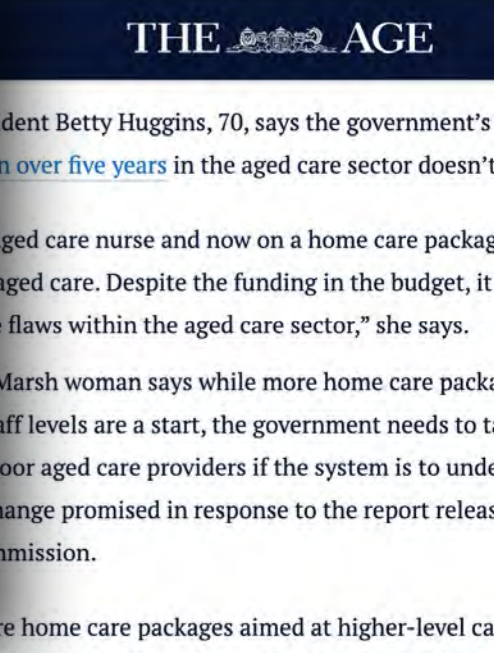
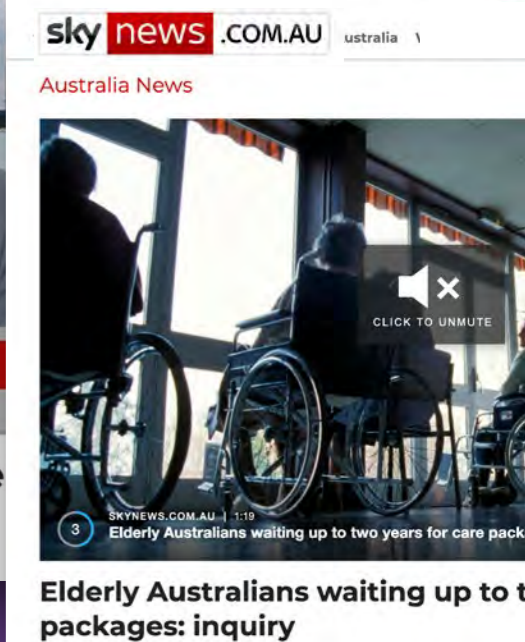
ABC Radio 18 Feb.

Elderly Australians waiting up to two years for care packages: inquiry.

Sky News 12 Feb 2021.

Federal budget 2021: Aged-care funding falls short of industry hopes.

The New Daily 12 May 2021.



hear people being physically and emotionally compromised on a waiting list ... is unAustralian," she says.

OPAN Projects 2020-2021

The following pages highlight key achievements and progression against OPAN National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP) approved work plan, which covers July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2022, under a NACAP extension grant for the same period.



Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds, ABC
Image: Nigel Wright (Photographer)

Improving Nationally Consistent Data

National Minimum Dataset

This year enabled the finalisation of the network’s first national minimum dataset in June 2021. The dataset will improve the level of detail about an older person’s experience of aged care, captured from the work of aged care advocates across the network. This will enable quantitative data to inform all our activities from the voice of the older person’s experience, contributing to identifying and taking action on broader systemic issues. The network will take further steps to operationalise the dataset’s introduction into advocacy and operations practice as an additional step towards national consistency. Implementation of enhanced client relationship management and data systems will support this data quality improvement project.

Nationally Consistent Advocate Practice & Service Delivery

NACAP Professional Development – National Aged Care Advocacy Meetings

National aged care advocate meetings began in February 2021 following consultation with advocates across the nation. Consultations revealed that advocates were seeking opportunities for:

- ★ General discussion
- ★ Question and answers with advocates in other states and territories
- ★ The sharing of valuable resources, research, and national referral pathways
- ★ Discussion about new and emerging trends in intake and advocacy case work
- ★ Raising systemic issues that need addressing at the national level
- ★ The sharing of updates on legislation changes and the national reform agenda

Advocates have evaluated the forums positively and say they value the opportunity to network and learn from their peers. Further work to support advocacy professional practice will be explored in 2022.

Advocate Knowledge Hub

We are developing an online Knowledge Hub for our advocates in consultation with our Advocacy, Operations and Practice Advisory Group, designed to be a one-stop shop for information that supports their casework. It will house a range of valuable resources to support professional development and national practice consistency and include aged care legislation and program manuals. This new hub will sit within our new online Learning Management System to help streamline access and is due for completion in November 2021.

Biannual Advocate Training and Development.

We commissioned Curtin University to explore professional development opportunities for aged care advocates and the skills, competencies, and training required to work effectively in the role. Curtin University documented their findings in a report titled *Developing the OPAN workforce: Exploring the skills, attributes, knowledge, professional development, and training requirements for effective aged care advocacy*. Curtin University identified several suggested directions relating to recruitment, workforce development and professional development, which will be considered in preparation for recruiting the expanded advocacy workforce.

Annual Support and Development Survey

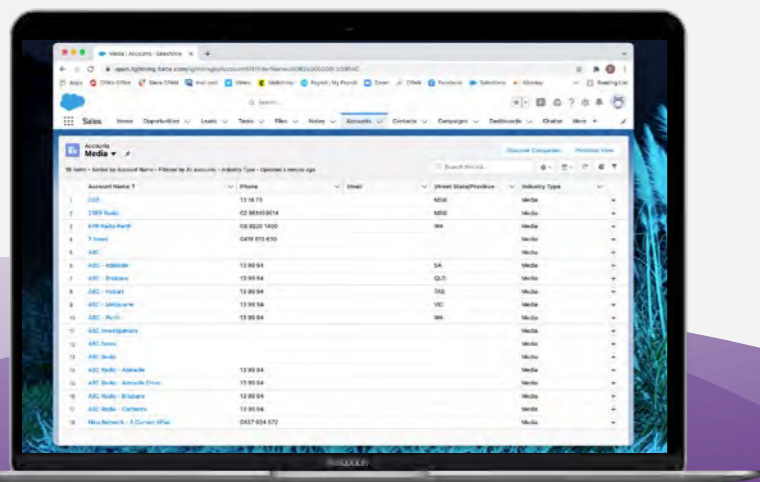
We undertook initial scoping of advocate training needs to establish foundational needs for advocate development. A formalised advocate survey will be developed following the recruitment of the new workforce in the 2021/22 financial year and will inform required professional development projects.

Practice Guidelines

Several practice guidelines were developed in consultation with the Advocacy Operations and Practice (AOP) Advisory Group this year. The guidelines address topics that are common across all network member organisations and require a consistent approach. Topics covered have included:

- ★ Demand Management
- ★ Consent to Advocate
- ★ The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

Work has also commenced on a practice guideline addressing the topic of diversity. Each guideline features several overarching guiding principles to facilitate national consistency, along with easy-to-read practical tips to support advocacy practice. With the onboarding of new advocates across the nation in 2021/22, the AOP Advisory Group will also consider addressing other topics within the practice guidelines to support onboarding new advocates and delivering nationally consistent advocacy practices.



NACAP Quality Standards

Aged Care Advocacy Capability Statement

The Aged Care Advocacy Capability Statement draws on Curtin University research and insights from our advocate network and will inform recruitment projects and training development pathways.

NACAP Standards

We submitted NACAP Standards to the Australian Government Department of Health in 2020. We received feedback to ensure the standards capture the reporting of risk and incidences to the aged care regulator and incorporated this request into Standard 3, Quality Service Delivery, Indicator 3.2 Core Service Delivery Processes. We also included this feedback into Standard 4, Promotion of the Rights of Older People and, in doing so, added in a new element, working with individuals. This element also aims to strengthen our focus on rights in advocacy practice.

The implementation of the standards will occur initially on a peer-based assessment basis to close any gaps between current external accreditation against approved standards and the elements of the NACAP Standards 2020. We are working with the Disability Advocacy peak, Standards Australia and JAS-ANZ (Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand) to clarify the process for recognising the standards across Standards Australia and documenting the cost-benefit of a recognised accreditation scheme for advocacy more broadly. This approach would have applicability across all areas of the individual advocacy support for people engaging with human services.

Enhancing NACAP Extended Hours Centre

We on-boarded a new call centre this year and extended hours of operation as part of efforts to improve the experience of callers to our national 1800 advocacy helpline and respond to incoming enquiries during peak COVID-19 outbreaks. Improvements have also included a new centralised Customer Relationship Management database to boost operational flows, data management, and enhanced customer service and data platform developments will continue.



Raising Older People's Voices – National Older Person Reference Group

We are working towards a society where older people are heard, informed, respected, aware of the support available to them and empowered to exercise their rights. Older people with lived experience across Australia advise us on achieving our goals as an organisation via our National Older Persons Reference Group. They offer knowledge and insights from their own experiences and people in their community, informing our work and raising the voices of older people. The National Older Persons Reference Group meets bi-monthly with discussions varying from consultations with the Australian Government Department of Health or the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission to contributing to aged care reforms, policy development and Royal Commissions.

In the past year, the group shared their insights for developing our position statements on aged care rights and the role of advocacy, principles relating to the Australian Government's Council of Elders, and the government's evaluation of the Grief and Trauma Packages established in response to the loss of life in aged care and impact on older people of COVID-19. Five group members sit on our internal Advisory Groups covering policy and systemic advocacy, communications and marketing and operations and practice, and their representation as conference speakers increased in the past six months. We have supported their attendance at several conferences and grew their participation as panellists in our webinars, offering their knowledge and lived experience to thousands of older people, friends, families and carers, and aged care professionals. Most group members have been trained in digital literacy and communicate via Slack (an online short messaging service program), closing digital knowledge gaps and empowering members to connect with their communities online. National

Older Person Reference Group members were also part of consultations on the Serious Incident Response Scheme, Care at Home initiative and the development of the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission website. An evaluation of the National Older Persons Reference Group has been completed, with findings to be actioned across 2021/22.



**Danijela Hlis – Member
OPAN National Older
Persons Reference Group**

Since its inception, Danijela Hlis has been a committed member of the National Older Persons Reference Group, championing older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and passionately advocating for people living with dementia. Her experience as a carer, bicultural social support worker, and bilingual diversional therapist is valuable. She has authored several books, including a bilingual collection of prose about the experience of ageing and dementia among culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

“I am a 72-year-old woman who is passionate about human rights for all Australians, irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, diversity, religion or sexuality. I have lived as a migrant in many countries, but in Australia I have lived for the migrants in one way or the other.”

COVID-19 Normal

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, a woman would visit her husband at his aged care home daily to spend time with him and support him with toileting and showering. However, management blocked visitors, and the man, who lives with dementia, was becoming challenging for staff to care for, and they locked him in his room, making him more unsettled. The woman reached out to our advocacy team for support to raise her concerns with the provider's aged care home manager and CEO. At first, the home resisted changing their visitation policy, but the advocate negotiated for the woman to visit her husband for an hour a day.

Cross-State Referral Triage

In the 2020/21 financial year, we focused on new operational projects to support the national triage of referrals during the COVID-19 pandemic with cross-state/territory advocacy work. New centralised triage management processes for specific state referrals have enabled network member organisations to respond to COVID-19 outbreaks using the strength of purpose-made advocacy teams that cross state and territory borders. Mobilising the advocacy team to operate in this way enabled necessary rapid responses with cross-jurisdictional support during outbreaks. This collaborative approach to advocacy is a fine example of the network operating at its best and demonstrates the compassion of our advocates.

Older Person COVID-19 Support Line

This year our network offered support under the National Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line alongside Council on the Ageing Australia, National Seniors Australia and Dementia Australia. The service gave information and referrals to vulnerable older people who may not have access to other forms of available knowledge, such as the internet, to ensure they could access support. The most common reasons for calls to this line were older people seeking information about:

- ★ Home care services – access, changes, issues, and costs of services
- ★ Residential age care – visitation restrictions and supports
- ★ Loneliness and social isolation
- ★ Understanding COVID-19 restrictions and essential workers
- ★ Access and choice of vaccination

COVID-19 Response Management Team

The COVID-19 Response Management Team (CRMT) stood up when an outbreak or partial outbreak occurred in a state or territory. The team typically consisted of the OPAN CEO, CRMT Manager, Operations Manager and relevant network member organisation CEO and Advocacy Manager. The team assessed the needs of older people during each outbreak and backed it up with appropriate support.

One of the biggest learnings from COVID-19 outbreaks in aged care is the need for effective and proactive communication with older people and their families, and providing up to date information on infection prevention, COVID-19 response measures and how to access support.

In addition to regular meetings, the activities of the CRMT included:

- ★ Determining the need for cross-border referral triage.
- ★ Informing older people and their families about advocacy support, Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line services, other support services such as the grief and trauma packages, Department of Health recommendations, COVID-19 restrictions, information about visiting aged care homes and updates to relevant materials.
- ★ In each outbreak, the relevant network member organisation connected to aged care homes with a COVID-19 outbreak to provide collateral and outreach support to residents and families via Zoom. These meetings were an opportunity for older people and their families to ask questions and get answers from their aged care providers and health officials. They were recorded for replay via a password-protected link in addition to summary information. Summary information was provided to the Australian Government Department of Health, with 12 meetings held over the past year with over 1200 attendees.

Stephanie (a family member) commented, "I would like to thank everyone involved for organising this (COVID-19 family Zoom) meeting and for providing this excellent level of communication information sharing. It's really appreciated."

Supporting Diversity



Our work primarily focuses on supporting vulnerable or disadvantaged populations seeking or accessing Australian-Government funded aged care. Diversity Practice Guidelines have been drafted for OPAN nationally and for use in network member organisations. Our webinars have provided valuable information and awareness-raising about the needs of people living with dementia, Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers, and veterans. Network representatives participated in a live webinar hosted by LGBTIQ+ Health Australia about the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety findings and recommendations and their impact on diversity and inclusion in aged care. We also participated in a Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia consultation on their new EnCOMPASS: Multicultural Aged Care Connector program. Further diversity work is commencing in the 2021/22 financial year, including a network Diversity Framework and work with providers under our new funding agreement.

Planning for NACAP Expansion

The Federal Budget handed down in May highlighted the importance of aged care advocacy via significant increased National Aged Care Advocacy Program funding and additional projects. We are currently defining details of the scope, parameters and activities for the following projects:

- ★ Diversity education for aged care providers – assisting providers to be more responsive to their communities diverse needs
- ★ Community Network Development – to partner with local community and volunteer organisations to raise the awareness of aged care advocacy
- ★ Points of presence – more locations where advocates can be accessed in person
- ★ Financial Information and education – so people can understand home care fees and costs and contest these when charges are inappropriate
- ★ Extended advocacy for vulnerable older people – providing support to those who are socially isolated

Demand for aged care advocacy continues to rise year on year, with 67% growth in aged care advocacy information and individual advocacy support cases over the last four years. The increase in base funding will allow us to almost double the number of advocates in our member organisations which will directly impact our ability to provide support for older people.

But with significant growth, comes significant risk, and therefore, thoughtful planning, preparation, and execution are critical. A working group was formed with four network member organisations, a human resources consultant and national secretariat representatives to discuss the best process to plan, recruit, onboard, train and assimilate recruits into the network by leveraging the strength of the network as a whole.

The group:

- ★ Created an advocate campaign to draw in-high calibre candidates
- ★ Introduced a process to review and shortlist candidates
- ★ Designed a training program to provide consistent benchmark-standard training.

The group meets fortnightly, with extraordinary meetings as required.

Awareness Raising

Over the past year, the network has dramatically increased the levels of awareness of aged care advocacy, promoted the rights of older people and provided information and education to older people, their families and carers.

Projects like our partnership with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation to launch our Stay Connected and Supported in Your Community initiative increased our reach to thousands of Australians. Our aged care newsletter, News for You, reached over 200,000 older people living in aged care homes.

Awareness of our work across the broader community grew significantly. Our CEO Craig Gear appeared more regularly and prominently across all print, digital, and broadcast media platforms to comment on various topics relating to older people. We also developed advertising campaigns to directly promote our services to older people while tripling our digital media reach, vastly growing engagement.

Restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 transmission provided opportunities to engage with people via webinars, attracting strong audience growth while generating equitable audience participation via comments and submitted questions. Our COVID-19 vaccination webinar series drew thousands of people seeking information about the vaccine rollout, and we ran interactive Q&A sessions live on Facebook, which we will continue.

Newsletter

In June 2021, we published and distributed the first edition of News for You, a free newsletter for older people living in aged care homes throughout Australia. The newsletter was co-branded with our network member organisations and packed with information

about advocacy and aged care rights, tips for maintaining health and wellbeing, heart-warming stories and entertainment. Further editions are being planned, and past editions can be downloaded from our website.

Aged Care Navigator – Facebook Roundtable

We've connected with older people via various digital platforms to support their learning about Australian Government-funded aged care services and how to access them, particularly when facing access barriers like geographical location, cultural diversity or language under the Aged Care Navigator trial.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have innovated how we connect with people by identifying their preferred platforms and developing strategic and accessible initiatives to share information and support, including live Q&A sessions with aged care navigators on Facebook. These one-hour sessions allowed older people, their families, friends and carers to ask questions and receive informative responses in real-time from April 13 to June 8, with questions ranging from self-managing aged care, the role of advocacy, and dementia and multicultural specific services.

This initiative supported increased audience engagement and awareness of advocacy. It culminated in a roundtable with a panel of aged care navigators and advocates who drew on their knowledge and professional experience to share insights, advice and suggestions about aged care with 500 people live and after streaming. These navigators were located across the country and specialised in supporting people seeking dementia care, multicultural communities and bilingual individuals.



In June 2021, we published and distributed the first edition of News for You, a free newsletter for older people living in aged care homes throughout Australia.

Systemic Advocacy

Contributing to Aged Care Reform

OPAN welcomed the final report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, and also importantly the Australian Government's response and increased funding for aged care in May 2021. OPAN is committed to doing all it can to bring forward the voice of older people into transforming the aged system into one that focuses on the human rights of every older person and embeds these into a new Aged Care Act. The transformation journey continues and we have worked with the Australian Government to build the aged care system for the future and fix the current access and care quality issues.

We've continued to participate in the aged care reform processes in several ways, including engaging in consultations, making submissions, attending workshops, participating in webinars and meetings, and presenting at conferences. In addition, we have encouraged NOPRG members to engage in reforms actively, such as attending Department of Health webinars and participating in consultations. In the 2020/21 financial year, we have:

- ★ Presented at the National Foundation for Australian Women policy workshop to inform the Social Policy Committee of the current and emerging aged care issues in home care and aged care homes;
- ★ Made submissions about the Australian National Aged Care Classification, Certificate III Individual Support in Ageing and Disability, restrictive practices, the Serious Incident Response Scheme and workforce regulation;
- ★ Provided feedback on Services Australia's review of its forms;
- ★ Attended a stakeholder roundtable on a National Register for Enduring Power of Attorney;

- ★ Attended Health Minister Greg Hunt's Royal Commission roundtable;
- ★ Provided extensive feedback with the NOPRG on the Voluntary Industry Code of Practice through consultations and submissions;
- ★ Attended numerous consultations, for example providing feedback on the Aged Care Centre for Growth and Translational Research;
- ★ Participated in judging various aged care awards;
- ★ Supported NOPRG members to participate in PriceWaterhouse Coopers research with people aged 65 and over who are receiving aged care or contemplating care and with carers and family members. The research will inform the reform process and communication to consumers, their carers and family.
- ★ Participated as a member of Standards Australia MB-027 Ageing Societies Committee.

Building Human Rights Into Aged Care – National Virtual Forum

OPAN engaged Ellen Fanning to facilitate a national discussion forum on building human rights into aged care and aged care practice. The forum was held online on 6 November 2020 due to COVID-19. Sector leaders and experts in human rights contributed to the discussion and formulation of the elements required to focus the aged care sector on the human rights of elder people in aged care. The forum highlighted the need for a new Aged Care Act which enshrined human rights into legislation.

Good practice policy models and practical approaches to embedding human rights into aged care practice were demonstrated. The work of Mercy Health and Daniella Greenwood

demonstrated what can be done to support human rights in aged care practice when it is led from the top, embedded in every policy and incorporated into every care interaction.

Royal Commission Final Report

We made ten submissions to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, including a submission in response to the Counsel Assisting, and gave evidence during hearings. Before the Aged Care Royal Commission Final Report was released, we submitted a series of responses on relevant issues to Health Minister Greg Hunt on actions the Australian Government could take to improve aged care. We released a response to the Aged Care Royal Commission Final Report and published a media release. Our analysis of key recommendations considered how the Final Report compared to ours and the Australian Government's submissions to the Counsel Assisting submission and was provided to the NOPRG and network members. In addition, we released two position statements on rights-based aged care and advocacy, with further position statements under development. We also engaged with the National Aged Care Alliance in their discussions and contributed to the joint consumer position statement on aged care.



Australian Government Response

We mapped the Australian Government's Federal Budget announcements against previous announcements and its response to the Aged Care Royal Commission Final Report, providing this analysis to the NOPRG

and network members for their information and advocacy work. We also consulted with NOPRG members on the proposed Council of Elders initiative, and the principles they felt should underlie such a Council, developing a 'principles document' that we submitted to the Department of Health and Aged Care Services Minister Richard Colbeck. Meetings were held with both Helen Grinbergs and Michael Lye to discuss the principles.

Home Care Reforms

In the 2020/21 financial year, we established a home care subgroup of NOPRG members and external older people, many of whom self-manage their home care package, to provide the consumer voice to Home Care Reforms. The group meets as issues arise and, similar to the NOPRG, is supported in consultations on reforms. Work in this area has included writing a submission on the new simplified and more transparent monthly financial statement for home care and attending the KPMG focus group on expanding the Serious Incident Response Scheme to home and community aged care with NOPRG and subgroup members. We have also engaged with the National Ageing Research Institute to support the development of evidence to support future reform. The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission has asked the Institute to gather insights from people receiving a home care package about how they would like their voices to be heard by the Commission. It will help the Commission better understand their needs and experiences, respond to complaints and improve service provision.

Submissions to Government

- ★ Submission to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Aged Care Amendment (Aged Care Recipient Classification) Bill 2020;
- ★ Home Care Package (HCP) Monthly Statement Template and Guidance document;
- ★ Response to the Department of Health on scamming of older people;
- ★ Submission to Skills IQ on the updated Certificate III in Individual Support, Certificate IV in Ageing Support and Certificate IV in Disability Support;
- ★ Submission on the Exposure Draft - Aged Care Legislation Amendment (Serious Incident Response Scheme) Instrument;
- ★ Submission to the Aged Care Worker Regulation Scheme.
- ★ Submission to the Standing Committee on Community Affairs on the Exposure Draft of the Aged Care Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Response) Principles 2021;
- ★ Submission to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee - Inquiry into the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Response No. 1) Bill 2021;
- ★ Attended consultation on a National Register of Enduring Power of Attorney (submission due in July);
- ★ Presented at a Hearing on the Aged Care Legislation Amendment (Financial Transparency) Bill 2020;

Inaugural Presenting Issues Report



This year we published a report titled *OPAN National Aged Care Advocacy Program 2020-2021: Raising the voice of people accessing aged care*. A thematic analysis informed this report of the qualitative data captured in network member quarterly reporting throughout 2020/21 and is the first definitive public annual report on the issues seen by aged care advocacy services. It shines a light on the experiences of a segment of older people engaging with the aged care system throughout 2020/21. It also provides insight into the valuable work of aged care advocates, reinforcing the importance of their role in supporting older people to understand and exercise their aged care rights.

The report also demonstrates that despite the challenges presented by COVID-19 during this period, our network members were able to adjust and rapidly respond to the emerging needs of more than 20,000 older people and their representatives. This report will be the first of many detailed annual reports focused on presenting aged care advocacy issues. The introduction of a minimum data set will support network members to gather nationally consistent quantitative data that will further enrich the findings of future reports and provide vital, evidence-based insights into systemic issues impacting older people across Australia.



Internal Advisory Group Meetings

This year we established a streamlined mechanism for consultation with members and selected representatives of the NOPRG. The aim was to increase contribution and produce the best results by drawing on the breadth and depth of their experience, enabling OPAN to legitimately maintain its claim to be Australia's voice for the rights of older people.

Three internal advisory groups feed into reform of NACAP and our external policy and marketing activities:

Policy and Systemic Advisory Group

Our Policy and Systemic Advocacy Advisory Group consists of two representatives from the NOPRG, network member CEOs, the OPAN CEO and the OPAN policy team. The advisory group aims to provide advice and guidance on OPAN's policy and systemic advocacy work and had its first meeting in December 2020 and work includes:

- ★ Response to the Aged Care Royal Commission Final Report;
- ★ Position statements on rights in aged care, advocacy and a rights-based Aged Care Act;
- ★ Responding to the introduction of the Serious Incident Response Scheme into home care.

Advocacy Practice & Operations Advisory Group

Our Advocacy, Operations and Practice Advisory Group consists of network member CEOs, Operational Managers and Advocacy Practice Managers. The group aims to provide input and feedback into national consistency projects and continuous operational improvement activities. The group met several times in 2021 to provide valuable contributions to the development of various projects, including:

- ★ The NACAP national minimum data set
- ★ Advocacy Practice guidelines
- ★ The implementation of bi-monthly national advocate meetings
- ★ Advocate Knowledge Hub

Communications Advisory Group

The group has met on four occasions and aims to provide consistent messaging and efficient collateral and resources across the network. The meetings include:

- ★ Reviewing communications schedule and indicating planned network member usage;
- ★ Collaborating and sharing collateral and content;
- ★ Proposed webinar topics;
- ★ Development of agreed description of the network
- ★ Assisting each other with their work.

There are five network members represented and two to three NOPRG members.

The network members and NOPRG representatives actively participated in all discussions, in particular, they chose webinar topics and agreed that each webinar should have an older person representative. Each webinar now has an older person as a panellist to ensure that the voice of the older person is always heard.

External Policy & Systemic Advocacy Meetings

Our executive and senior management have participated in several consultative forums and advisory groups, including:

- ★ Quarterly meetings with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, OPAN and network members to review issues, concerns and complaints and share knowledge.
- ★ Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Consultative forum
- ★ National Aged Care Alliance quarterly forums
- ★ Aged Care Taskforce, Services Australia
- ★ Health Provider Partnership Forum, Department of Veterans' Affairs
- ★ Restraint Advisory Group
- ★ Elder Abuse Action Australia Advisory Group
- ★ IPA (Improved Payment Arrangements) Monthly Forums
- ★ 56 meetings of the AHPPC Aged Care Advisory Group

These are an opportunity for OPAN to raise the issues that older people have raised with us and to utilise the information gathered through our members advocacy work about gaps and concerns. It also enables OPAN to ensure that the voices of older people are heard and considered in discussions at these forums.



Partnering with the ABC

In April 2021, we launched the Stay Connected and Supported in Your Community initiative in partnership with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Emmy-winning television series Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds. The social impact campaign addressed loneliness and social isolation among older people living in their own homes and included a national phone service to connect them to support services. Each episode shared a call to action via a visual bumper and voiceover: "If you, or an older person you know, would like to stay connected and supported in your community call OPAN on 1800 001 321 or visit the website opan.org.au/stayconnected".

Our South Australian network member, Aged Rights Advocacy Service and our NSW member, Seniors Rights Service, jointly delivered this service and responded to calls that resulted from call to action, with support, information, and service linkage provided to 379 older people. Thousands of people used the website to self-serve, watch our short videos on the benefit of supports and connect with relevant services. The partnership enabled us to raise awareness of our network and a broad range of services, including the Community Visitors Scheme, to help people address social isolation and loneliness, in addition to maintaining their independence at home. Following the series, we hosted an event at Parliament House in Canberra, drawing on the inspiration of the show to spark a conversation about social isolation and solutions with aged care sector leaders and policy makers.

Janet Roche Profile - Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS)



Janet joined ARAS as a member of the Stay Connected and Supported in Your Community team in March 2021, following her work as a solicitor at the Legal Services Commission of South Australia, where she supported ARAS with legal support and measures to prevent the abuse of older people. She is passionate about connecting with older people, listening to their stories, understanding their needs and life preferences, and providing information and linkages to services and activities to reduce their vulnerability and improve their overall well-being. Older people responded positively after using the Stay Connected and Supported service, saying they enjoyed interacting with staff and felt excited about the options available and how connecting with local services and activities have enhanced their lives.

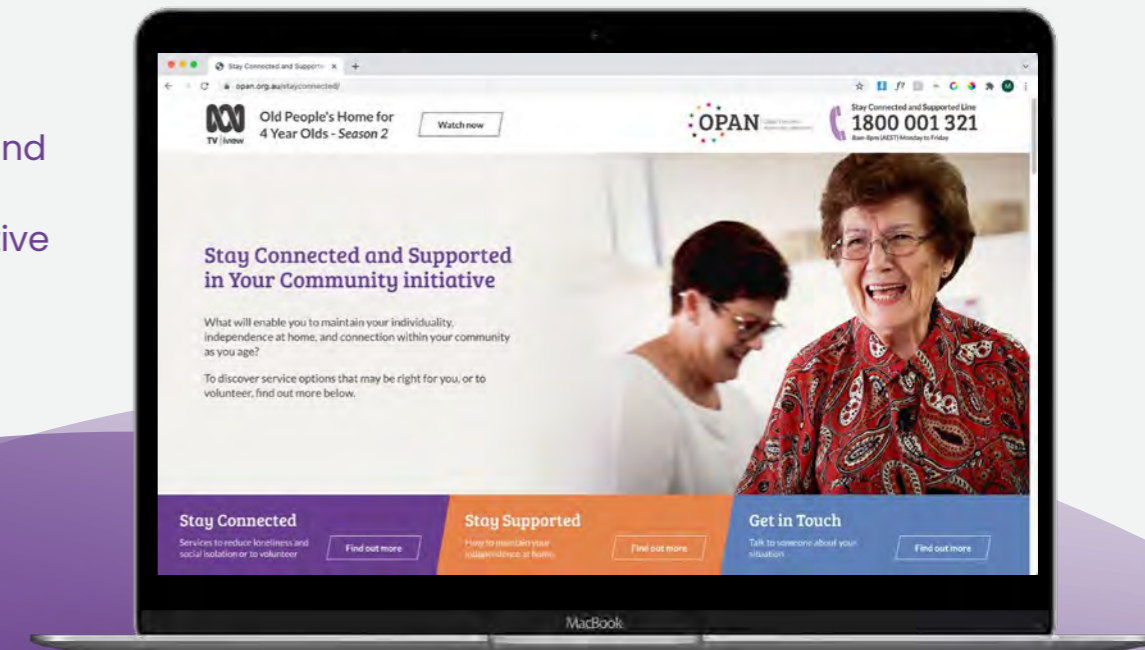
Stay Connected and Supported Intake Team

The Stay Connected and Supported intake team provided information and service linkages to 379 older people, family members, representatives, and potential Community Visitors Scheme volunteers between April 6 and June 30, 2021. The team connected people to the initiative's partner organisations, including our network members, My Aged Care, the Community Visitors Scheme, COTA, and National Seniors Australia for wellbeing checks through the Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line, Dementia Australia, the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement's aged care COVID-19 grief and bereavement service, and Playgroup Australia's intergenerational play programs, as well as other national services such as FriendLine, and several state and territory and local community-based services and groups.

Stay Connected and Supported Microsite

A microsite was developed as part of the Stay Connected and Supported in Your Community initiative, attracting 17,038 unique page views between April 6 and June 30, 2021. Traffic to our main website - opan.org.au - increased considerably in April, when Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds aired, with 14,864 unique page views from April 6 to May 3, up from 5,221 unique page views in the same period the year before. Website users also spent longer on pages featuring self-help content, with data showing our website performed consistently high and above the healthcare industry benchmark. We received an additional 241 self-help microsite forms for the Community Visitors Scheme program, completed by people seeking or looking to become volunteer visitors.

Stay Connected and Supported in Your Community initiative microsite



Website and Learning Management System

We engaged a user-experience designer and website development company to rebuild our website - opan.org.au - from the ground up to vastly improve the user experience and accessibility in addition to a fresh design and straightforward content. These professionals will follow the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 to ensure people with disabilities have equitable access to information and resources to support their aged care experience, along with general visual legibility and navigation ease. The rebuild will commence in July 2021 and a go-live before the end of the year.

A Learning Management System was implemented and launched in June 2021 for the project - *Abuse of the Older Person: eLearning Program for Health and Aged Care Professionals* with a significant uptake by the industry. A further review of Learning Management Systems will take place in the 2021/22 financial year for suitability of ongoing online education.

eLearning Program

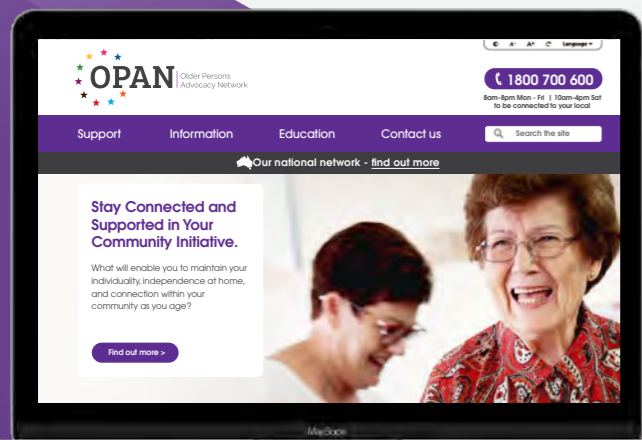


Abuse of the Older Person: eLearning Program for Health and Aged Care Professionals

Health and aged care professionals play an essential role in addressing the abuse of older people. As trusted professionals, they are well placed to identify signs of abuse of older people through their established professional relationship with the people they care for.

The online training *Abuse of the older person: eLearning Program for Health and Aged Care Professionals* is an outcome of the Australian Law Reform Commission report recommendations on Elder Abuse (2017). The project involved OPAN forming a collaborative partnership with Age Discrimination Commissioner, the Hon Dr Kay Patterson AO, and a national coalition of subject matter experts and health professionals. It supports health and aged care professionals to recognise and respond to the abuse of the older person by providing up to date, at point of care, research, expertise and resources. It was launched in June 2021 and received overwhelming registrations, with participants completing approximately 10+ hours of self-directed learning.

Find out more here opan.org.au/health-professionals-education-2



Navigating Aged Care Phase II

Navigating the aged care system is sometimes not easy. It may be difficult to know where and how to start. Alongside continuing to moderate and engage with people on the Facebook group Navigating the Aged Care System, we hosted a series of webinars to step viewers through the process of navigating aged care, with emphasis on being prepared.

Phase I of the pilot commenced in January 2019 and was extended to June 30, 2021. In the last year, we delivered five webinars designed to support diverse groups to understand and seek aged care services with ease.

Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers

We delivered two webinars to support Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers to navigate aged care services that would best suit their needs. They aired on November 12th and 26th. During the first webinar, *Appropriate Care for Forgotten Australians*, we launched 'Safe and inclusive care for Forgotten Australians', a research report from Flinders University. The second webinar, *Navigating Aged Care Services for Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers*, explored engaging services to meet their individual needs. In total we garnered 484 viewers and some stimulating comments and feedback.



People Experiencing and at Risk of Homelessness

We aired two webinars, one on July 8, 2020 discussing homelessness and the second on March 30, 2021 discussing services to support older people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We explored services for individuals in addition to resources and information for aged care professionals to help them. We garnered 784 views in total.

Veterans

We facilitated a town hall-style webinar to bring together individuals at Returned and Services League Australia (RSL) branches via Zoom to provide information about aged care services for veterans and answer questions live on April 15. We drew on the support of RSL branches to engage with their members in a safe and familiar environment.

Preventing Sexual Assault of Older People

We have partnered with Celebrate Ageing and the Older Women's Network New South Wales on a collaborative project to build the skills and capacity of residential aged care service providers to respond to and prevent the sexual assault of older people living in aged care homes.

Ready to Listen is the first Australian Government-funded resource of its kind in Australia. It is the start of an ongoing process of acknowledging that older people are sexually assaulted, developing prevention strategies and holding perpetrators accountable.

Dr Catherine Barrett, Director and Founder of Celebrate Ageing, is developing education and resources for professionals in residential aged care, alongside a leadership course to support champions of change. This project aims to prevent as many sexual assaults as possible in aged care homes by building the skills and capacity of staff and create ongoing leadership to respond to and prevent sexual assault. The project was kicked off in June 2021 and is due for completion in June 2022.

The program reach will be amplified through the leadership knowledge transfer. We aim to train a total of thirty organisations with three ambassadors in each organisation. Their role will be to pass on their knowledge within their organisation as well as partner organisations, spreading the information throughout the aged care industry.

Advocates as Agents



This project was launched last year as a pilot and aims to provide advocates with the systems they need to best support older people to access their information in My Aged Care. It has since been extended to June 30, 2022

Since June 30, 2021, twenty-nine advocates have joined the program, and network members have agreed to enrol their advocates, proving the program's success. We ran a survey in December to garner feedback, which has informed adjustments to the program.

Training for CVS Volunteers

Advocate Access and Abuse Prevention Training for CVS Volunteers

The Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) is a vital support for older people who are socially isolated. Every day volunteers provide friendship and support to older people in the community and aged care homes. Over 11,000 older people are supported by these friendship partners each year.

OPAN saw the need to support those that support – the CVS volunteers and their auspice organisations. CVS auspices and volunteers had told us that sometimes it's hard to know where to turn to when the older person they support needs information, advice and assistance with their aged care. And that's where OPAN and aged care advocates come in!

We developed an online induction program about the National Aged Care Advocacy Program, the role of aged care advocates, the Charter of Aged Care Rights, OPAN's Elder Help mobile phone application and how to access an aged care advocate. The training also outlined the signs and risks of someone who might be experiencing abuse. The training helped CVS volunteers to take action and seek advice if they 'noticed something' that wasn't quite right when they were providing friendship support to an older person.

The online training was launched on 25 February 2021 by the Hon. Senator Richard Colbeck, Minister for Senior Australian and Aged Care, with presentations by Esis Tawfik NSW/ACT/VIC CVS coordinator and Craig Gear, OPAN CEO. To date, 745 have viewed the online training.



Our People



The OPAN Team

Executive and Administration

Craig Gear

Craig Gear has been the CEO of OPAN since August 2018. Prior to that, he assisted in the establishment of OPAN as the Chair of Seniors Rights Service, the NSW member of OPAN and our New South Wales network member. Craig has led the development of OPAN throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. He is passionate about representing the views and voice of older people to government and establishing OPAN as a strong network of the nine member organisations and as the peak of individual aged care advocacy.

Amanda Beezley

Amanda Beezley is our Executive Administrator, supporting our CEO Craig Gear OAM and the broader team to function fully in their roles. Her responsibilities range from welcoming new team members, organising on behalf of the national secretariat and scheduling and coordinating internal meetings. Amanda's biggest challenge is ensuring Craig's calendar flows like magic and balances constant demand for media appearances, Department of Health enquiries, functions and events. Her current joy during COVID-19 lockdown has been keeping her two young sons busy and fostering two rescue kangaroo joeys.

Communications and Marketing

Christine Day

Christine Day, Manager of Business Operations & Special Projects, manages operations across various areas of OPAN, including COVID-19 Response Management Team (CRMT), Communications & Marketing and Education. She managed the CRMT and worked with member organisations and the Department of Health to ensure the voices of older people, their families and representatives were heard. This included involvement in family zoom meetings, webinars and general communications and collateral to amplify, simplify and clarify COVID-19 information.

Jane Polkinghorne

Jane Polkinghorne, Communications and Marketing Team Lead, works with OPAN's communications team to oversee all the organisation's communications, including webinar planning and promotion, social media, media interactions and several newsletters. They managed the production of News for You, an informative printed newsletter distributed to 270,000 people living in aged care homes. They also introduced The National Advocate, a monthly e-newsletter sent to 23,000 subscribers, in addition to collaborating on OPAN's highly successful COVID-19 webinars throughout 2021.

Sonia Kohlbacher

Sonia Kohlbacher, Public Affairs and Marketing Coordinator, is part of the Communications and Marketing team. She works to expand and engage OPAN's external audiences, collaborate with various internal and external stakeholders across media and promotional activities and build OPAN's media profile. In the past year, she refined OPAN's public messaging, secured valuable media coverage and contributed to a tripling in digital audience growth.

Summeet Seyan

Summeet Seyan, Communications and Marketing Coordinator, is a member of the Communications and Marketing team. She has driven website and electronic direct mail content development and implemented strategic data analysis to inform communications innovation. Summeet has focused on fostering audience engagement and developing initiatives to drive substantial digital growth and engagement gains, such as Aged Care Navigator Q&A series on Facebook Live. She is passionate about reaching audiences that are often less heard.

Kyle Olsen

Kyle Olsen, Webinar Moderator and Content Producer, has worked with the Communications and Marketing Team to produce 31 webinars that have attracted a total of 70,000 views. His role is to research, write and present valuable and informative content, resources and tools to older people, their families, friends and carers, and aged and health care professionals in a friendly, relaxed, and relatable manner whilst reinforcing our beliefs and raising awareness of our services.



The OPAN Team

Policy and Systemic Advocacy

Samantha Edmonds

Samantha Edmonds, Manager Policy and Systemic Advocacy, engages with network member organisations, older people and aged care sector peak bodies to develop policy responses, position statements and respond to inquiries. She raises concerns and issues through advocacy to the Australian government, participates in government and peak body advisory groups and consultations to advance aged care reform and is involved in research. Sam is committed to the rights of older people and ensuring their voices are heard and is passionate about diversity.

Maria Berry

Maria Berry has provided support to numerous departments, including the Communications and Marketing and Education teams, sharing her valuable knowledge of effective community engagement to inform campaigns and awareness-raising activities. She moderated the Navigating the Aged Care System group on Facebook, driving engagement growth and facilitating conversations among audiences tuning into our live webinars.

Education

Helen Walker

Helen Walker, Education Specialist, collaborates with internal departments and a broad range of stakeholders to design, develop and deliver impactful education. This year, she led a new learning management system to allow aged and health care professionals access to education and training packages. She was also critical to the launch of Abuse of the Older Person: eLearning Program for Health and Aged Care Professionals to support the prevention, recognition, and response to the abuse of older people.

NACAP Operations

Catherine Stade

Catherine Stade, Manager NACAP Operations and SDO Projects, manages the process and design of operational interfaces between our central national referral points, including phone lines, call centres and other referral channels, with our network members. She is part of the COVID-19 Response Management Team. She participates in developing systems and processes to enable cross-state operational functions between members and oversees national consistency projects, including a minimum data set and support of Anna Harrington's lead on advocacy practice development projects and groups.

Anna Harrington

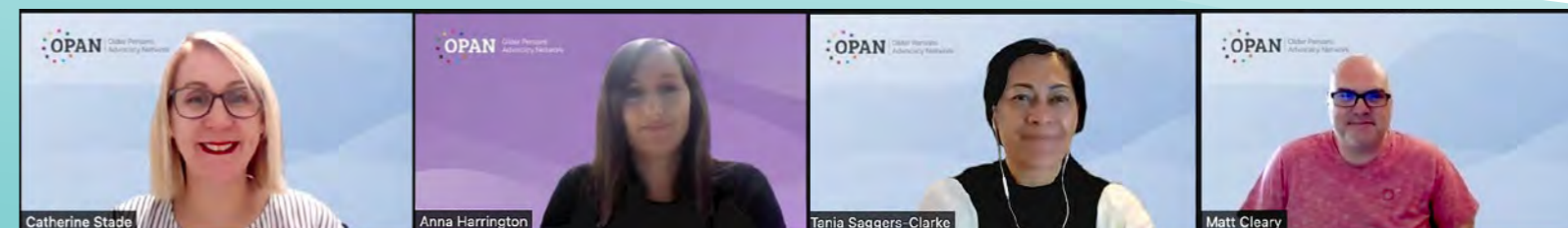
Anna Harrington, Senior Policy & NACAP Project Officer, works closely with network members and advocates to inform systemic advocacy, foster national consistency in advocacy practice, and support advocate professional development. This year Anna introduced bi-monthly meetings for the national advocate team as part of NACAP Projects, bringing advocates together to share their knowledge, experiences and resources. The sessions have also proven to be an excellent means for identifying national aged care issues requiring systemic advocacy.

Tania Saggars-Clarke

Tania Saggars-Clarke, Project Support Operations, provides operational support, quality assurance and reporting activities across our projects such as advocacy, the Older Persons COVID-19 Support Line, and Stay Connected and Supported. She works collaboratively with national and international call centre staff, network members and internal departments and was instrumental in the successful account management and transition of call centre activities to one centralized depository.

Matthew Cleary

Matthew Cleary, Program Manager Aged Care & NACAP Reform, manages the consultation process across the network related to the significant expansion of the NACAP program as well as additional strategic projects. He has ensured every OPAN member organisation is aware of the NACAP expansion, had a voice in shaping the future program response and then ensured this information has been shared with the Department.



Our Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors comprises representatives from each network member organisation, and each brings a unique set of expertise and experiences to deliver effective governance.

Mary Anne Hunt, Chairperson

Mary Anne Hunt is the Chair of our Board of Directors and President of the Board of Management at Elder Rights Advocacy, our network member in Victoria. With significant leadership experience in a range of communities and organisations, including health, family, disability, aged services and vocational education, she has a passion for the rights of older people and ensuring they receive the highest quality of care.

Helen McDevitt, Director

Helen was appointed as Chair of the ADACAS Board in December 2019 after retiring from a senior Australian public servant career. She has a passion for supporting and improving the lives of people living with a disability and young people by promoting social inclusion, education and workforce participation. Helen has contributed to national reforms in the health, education and social services sectors and played a vital role in transitioning to the NDIS.

Anne Burgess, Deputy Chairperson

Anne has invaluable and extensive experience at an executive level in government with previous roles as Director of Mental Health at the Dept. of Human Services, Director of the Office for Women and Acting Commissioner at the Equal Opportunity Commission. She is Chair of South's Australia's Aged Rights Advocacy Service, Vice-President of COTA SA and Chair of its Policy Council, and Chair of the Community Visitor Scheme's Advisory Committee.

Brian O'Keefe, Director

Brian is a Director of Advocare Incorporated in Western Australia, a member of its Executive Finance Committee and past chair. He is an accomplished not-for-profit Board member and senior executive with a background in financial services, building and managing successful teams to achieve desired outcomes. Brian has qualifications in commerce, finance, investment and mortgage broking management and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD).

Judy Davis, Director

Judy is an experienced Board Director and Executive Manager with demonstrated success in government and not for profit organisations across health, community and social service sectors. With postgraduate academic qualifications in Public Health, Governance, Company Directorship and Strategic Management, Judy is skilled in leading management teams to plan, deliver and assess programs to address identified needs, deliver quality services and make a difference in people's lives. She brings these skills to her governance role with OPAN.

Kimmy Jongue, Director

Kimmy is an audit director at MGI Sydney with over 15 years of experience providing audit and assurance services for large and small, private, public and not-for-profit organisations. Her expertise extends across various industries, including First Nations services, government, utilities, infrastructure, health, not-for-profits, and technology. She is interested in working with senior management, directors, boards and advisory boards, providing experience-based commercial advice on how they can achieve their strategic objectives, focusing on sound decision-making.

Leanne Groombridge, Director

Leanne is the Chief Executive Officer of Your Say – Advocacy Tasmania. She brings extensive executive leadership experience to the Board developed through a diverse career working in the corporate, tertiary education and not for profit sectors. Leanne brings core skills of shaping and delivering strategy, advocacy, change management, human resources, industrial relations, and governance.

Liz Kearins, Director

Liz is a strategy, leadership and culture consultant with Actrua Performance Cultures. An experienced senior executive and board director, Liz also chairs the Board of Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia in Queensland. With a depth of experience across the management consulting, utilities, healthcare, environment, tourism, and media sectors, Liz is passionate about championing advocacy's critical role in supporting people to realise their rights.

Margaret Duckett, Director

Margaret is a passionate advocate for older Australians and was her mother's primary carer from 2010 to 2016. She was appointed Board Chair and President at Seniors Rights Service in 2018 and was admitted as a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors in 1997. Margaret has held senior government and non-government roles, including Director, Office for Ageing, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care from 2003 to 2005.

OPAN member organisations by state or territory:

