



MEDIA RELEASE

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Increased action urgently needed to lift quality of aged care

Australia's aged care sector urgently needs greater focus immediately to lift the quality of care, according to the national Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN). OPAN welcomes the Prime Minister's announcement of a Royal Commission into the aged care sector, but this must not stop investment in staff, training, advocacy and improving quality now.

OPAN understands the Royal Commission will examine:

- The quality of care provided to older Australians, and the extent of substandard care
- The challenge of providing care to Australians with disabilities living in residential aged care, particularly younger people with disabilities
- The challenge of supporting the increasing number of Australians with dementia and addressing their care needs as they age
- The future challenges and opportunities for delivering aged care services in the context of changing demographics, including in remote, rural and regional Australia
- Any other matters that the Royal Commission considers necessary

OPAN CEO Craig Gear said devastating examples of elder abuse continue to undermine community confidence in Australia's aged care system.

"After a senate inquiry and a parliamentary probe, it is clear that we are seeing an industry under extreme pressure and more needs to be done," Mr Gear said. "A Royal Commission is supported if it leads to long term change to protect older people, and we need action now."

"The examples of elder abuse that have recently been brought to light are shocking – even one incident is one too many.

"And it's also an unfair reflection on the thousands of hard-working and dedicated staff doing their best every day to care for older Australians.

"It's no secret that resources and funding of the aged care sector is not keeping pace with demand and individuals' complex care needs. Our ageing population means the situation will only get worse unless there is increased investment in the industry and a greater focus on quality of care."

Mr Gear said it is critical more resources are dedicated to improve staff education and training and to educate older Australians, the broader community and service providers about ageism and elder abuse. More resources are also needed for community aged care with over 108,000 people on the waiting list for Home Care Packages.



“We also need resources to effectively promote elder abuse helplines and to employ advocates, lawyers and social workers to engage with victims and their families,” he said.

“The more people know about the support and services available to them, the more chance we have that they’ll contact us when they need our support.

“Neglect is a form of abuse too and older people and their families must have a support system they can depend on. OPAN and our member organisations are here to support – and we have advocates available throughout Australia who provide free and independent advice to older people and their families if there are any concerns with the quality of care being delivered.”

OPAN is an independent national voice for aged care consumers and their representatives and provides free advice to help older people navigate issues related to Commonwealth funded aged care and community services.

Consumers and their families looking for assistance can reach OPAN on 1800 700 600 or www.opan.com.au.

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ABOUT OPAN

The Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) provides an independent, national voice for aged care advocacy and promotes excellence and national consistency in the delivery of advocacy services for older people. Funded by the Australian government, the network provides free services to help older people and their representatives address issues related to Commonwealth funded aged care services. OPAN is made up of nine State and Territory service delivery organisations.

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