



MEDIA RELEASE

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Planned path out of COVID-19 restrictions for vaccinated older Australians needed now

As Australia gets closer to reaching 70% and 80% vaccination coverage that will allow restrictions to ease, older people are looking ahead to what a re-opening will look like for them.

Older people receiving aged care in their own homes, and particularly in residential homes, have been restricted in the harshest ways throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Craig Gear, CEO of the Older Persons Advocacy Network, says older Australians are looking to the future of restrictions easing and being removed as the nation's COVID-19 vaccine coverage increases.

“We need to be planning for this now and communicating with older people about how they can prepare,” Mr Gear said.

“Restrictions should not be more significant for fully vaccinated older Australians than they are for anyone else.

“We should be doing everything we can to support older people getting back to doing what they love with the people they love as soon as they can do so safely.”

OPAN welcomed the recognition of the importance of older people in residential aged care being able to leave their facility for exercise in line with other members of the community under the New South Wales Stay at Home Orders.

OPAN and its members remain concerned about the local health service and aged care provider interpretations of the visitation restrictions and ‘Stay at Home’ requirements which are broader than those for other Australians and which go against the rights of older people.

“The rights under the Charter of Aged Care Rights are clear – older people have the right to maintain their independence, have control and make choices about their care, personal and social life, including where choices involve personal risk,” Mr Gear said.

OPAN reiterates that the restrictions in Aged Care Homes must be proportionate to the level of current risk and that restricting residents to room isolation should be only utilised in the event of outbreaks in facilities and only for the shortest possible time.



“Under the [industry code for visitation](#), the aged care sector agreed to a set of rules for visiting older people in aged care homes and circumstances for leaving,” Mr Gear said.

“The community expects aged care providers to comply with the code and public health orders, including permitted reasons for visiting and leaving residential homes.

“We know how much it will mean to older people in residential homes who are under stay-at-home orders in New South Wales to be able to leave for exercise, a crucial part of maintaining their health and wellbeing,” Mr Gear said.

The Older Persons Advocacy Network welcomed changes to residential aged care visits in areas of New South Wales that are no longer under stay-at-home orders and changes in regional Victoria allowing prospective residents to visit aged care homes.

“We will continue to work with health departments to identify more reasonable restrictions that enable older people to maintain their wellbeing and a path out of limitations as we get closer to reaching 70% and 80% vaccination coverage.”

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IMPORTANT NOTICE TO MEDIA FOR STORIES RELATING TO OLDER PEOPLE

It is critical to provide older people with an avenue to get support when covering stories about aged care. We strongly encourage you to include the following message in your story to enable older people to seek support:

For information or support regarding aged care, please call the Older Persons Advocacy Network on 1800 700 600 or visit opan.org.au