

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

*Monday, 15 November 2021*

### **AGED CARE AND COMMUNITY SECTOR URGES AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT RIGHTS-BASED AGED CARE ACT**

A broad coalition of aged care and community sector organisations are urging the Australian Government to build on its current reform agenda and commit to implementing a rights-based Aged Care Act that embeds older people's rights at its core.

Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) CEO Craig Gear said an aged care transformation sparked by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety was a once in a lifetime opportunity to rebuild the sector based on prioritising the rights of older people.

"What everyone wants as they get older is to keep their independence and stay in control of their lives, as is their right, but currently the system does not support older people to do this," Mr Gear said.

"We've heard many instances of older people's rights being abused, disrespected and disregarded, in evidence to the Royal Commission and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Implementing a rights-based Aged Care Act was the top recommendation from Royal Commissioners, the Honourable Tony Pagone QC and Lynelle Briggs AO and must be the top priority in transforming Australia's aged care sector.

"The Australian Government has taken a number of really important steps in response to the Royal Commission, and we need them to take another crucial one.

"We're calling on the Australian Government to enable older Australians to exercise their rights by ensuring that a rights-based Aged Care Act gets developed and implemented, and we look forward to working with them to achieve this.

"Let's work together to implement a rights-based Aged Care Act by the Royal Commission deadline of July 2023."

The Australian Government has accepted the Royal Commission's recommendation, but Mr Gear said a lack of focus and language about 'rights' in discussions about a new Act was concerning, and there will be resistance to a rights-based Act by vested interests in aged care.

"Ensuring older people have rights and can exercise them should be the starting point of their aged care experience," Mr Gear said.

"We have a unique opportunity to work with older people, aged care providers and governments to build an aged care sector that embeds the rights of older people at its core and empowers them."

OPAN's call on the Australian Government to commit to and implement a rights-based Aged Care Act is backed by 25 organisations, including consumer groups – COTA Australia, Dementia Australia, National Seniors Australia, FECCA and Carers Australia – professional organisations – Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, Allied Health Professionals Australia – and others.

Maree McCabe AM, Dementia Australia CEO says: "Rights-based approaches are all the more important for people living with dementia, some of the most vulnerable people in our community, who experience discrimination and are often more disempowered than other older people."

Annie Butler, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Federal Secretary says: "Older people's human rights in care delivery have been ignored for far too long, the new aged care act must be underpinned by human rights and require a highly skilled workforce that can meet the needs of older people."

Ian Yates AM, Chief Executive of COTA Australia says: "Importantly, the Australian Government is committed to a way forward to address these issues raised by the Royal Commission, and now we want to see a best practice, rights-based approach to the very development of the new Act."

Read [the joint statement](#) supporting a rights-based Aged Care Act from the Older Persons Advocacy Network's and aged care sector organisations.

## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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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](http://opan.org.au)*