

Aged Care – what the new act means for you !

With new rules, and responsibilities, is the rebirthed Aged Care Act a phoenix from the ashes or a wolf in sheep clothing?

It's not something people want to hear but policy is hard. There are always compromises that must be made, because agreement is difficult and budgets are finite. The ongoing debate over aged care is no exception. Over almost 4 years ago, the Royal Commission into Aged care Quality and Safety made 148 recommendations to fix the aged care mess. However, even the commissioners couldn't agree, putting forward slightly differing options on funding reform. While both argued for a levy, they were not in agreement how that would work. Funding is a central problem with growing demand as the population ages. Both Labor and the Coalition rejected a levy as politically unpalatable. It has led the government to propose changes to means testing as the mechanism to free up funds to meet demand and improve service quality. Now that the Aged Care Act has been passed with the support of the 2 major parties, the Federal Government has much to do to bring the changes to life.

Support at Home...

The highest level package will offer approximately \$78,000 per year to pay for home care services, allowing older people greater capacity to stay at home if they can. NSA supports this in principle, but raised concern about the absence of strict timeframes for the approval process and questioned how the transition through packages might occur more quickly given the already long waiting times for home care. While the government has set a target to have approvals within 3 years by 2027, this is not a legislated target that has to be met by government. Support at Home will also have a defined list of services capped for items to avoid overcharging by providers. Services will be grouped into 3 categories, clinical, independence, and every day living, to be able for contributions to be applied at different rates for different type of services. Services such as gardening will attract limited subsidies, whilst clinical care services, such as wound care, will be fully subsidised. This is a sensible approach, but there are already concerns that some items such as personal care, will attract co-payments above what is reasonable. The devil will be in the detail, and the rules will likely be needed to be reviewed on an ongoing basis to get things right. That is why NSA has called for the inclusion of a more frequent review of the Act and for the inclusion of a formal mechanism to allow anyone to propose a sensible change of rules.

Statement of rights.....

One of the most important changes to the Aged Care Act is the inclusion of a Statement of Rights. The Statement of Rights includes a positive duty on providers to take all reasonable and proportionate steps to act in a way that are compatible with a person's right as set out in the legislation. The rights are not enforceable by a court or tribunal. Ultimately' it will be up to the new complaints commissioner to assess whether those rights have been breached and what action should be taken if a conflict is not resolved and requires escalation. Recently, a story came to light of 2 people in residential care being separated from another person, as a romance blossomed, because it was dismissed by family as "stupid" at their age. This contravenes the new Act's Statement of Rights, which states 'An individual has a right to exercise choice and make decisions that affect the individual's life .. and take personal risks, including in pursuit of the individual's quality of life, social participation, and intimate and sexual relationships".

Complaints Commissioner....

The new Act includes an independent complaints commissioner who will have their work cut out for them balancing the rights and wading through thousands of pages of legislation and rules when assessing if action is required when a complaint is escalated. NSA had hoped the complaints commissioner would be wholly separate from the regulator, the Aged Care Quality and safety Commission. But alas, the position will not. There are many other changes, too many to list here, but rest assured NSA will continue to advocate for you to promote sensible reform to ensure you can get access to the care you need when you need it.

People born in the 50s have lived in 7 decades, 2 centuries & 2 millenniums. We had the best music, the fastest cars. Drive-In Theatres, Milk Bars and Happy Days. And we are not even that old yet, we're just enjoying the fruits of our Labour!!!

National Seniors

AUSTRALIA

Modbury Branch Newsletter

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Branch Diary

Guest speakers

- 20th Jan. **Martin Paech** (Vocalist, musical Afternoon)
- 17th Feb. **Catalyst Centre Speaker** (Seniors information Centre)
- 17th, March **Paul Bartlett Antiques Valuations**

Modbury NSA is sponsored by the Modbury Plaza Hotel

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