



Australian Government

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing



New Aged Care Act and Volunteering in Aged Care

**A Guide for Providers, Volunteer
Managers and Volunteers**

June 2025



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About this information

Purpose of this booklet

Volunteers are an essential part of the aged care system. Volunteering in aged care contributes to positive outcomes such as increased mental health and wellbeing, social connectedness, reduced isolation and ageing in place.

This booklet has been developed by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (the department) to outline the upcoming changes under the new [Aged Care Act 2024](#) (the new Act), which commences on 1 November 2025.

It is designed to help you understand what will change, and what will remain the same, so you can continue to provide high-quality, respectful, and rights-based volunteering support to older people.

You can:

- Learn more about the [aged care reforms](#) and the [new regulatory model](#).
- Access [learning modules](#) to support your understanding.
- Visit our [Volunteering in Aged Care](#) webpage for resources.
- Contact us at agedcarevolunteer@health.gov.au for feedback.

Note: The information in this booklet is current at time of publication and may be subject to change prior to 1 November 2025



1 Changes to aged care

1.1 Positive changes to aged care

The Australian Government is transforming aged care laws to put the rights of older people first. The new Act will commence 1 November 2025.

The new Act is very different from the existing legislation. It focuses on empowering older people and upholding their rights, needs and personal choices. It also impacts the way the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (Commission) regulates providers and holds them accountable for complying with their responsibilities.

The needs and rights of older people are at the centre of the system, and older people are supported to live at home for longer.

The new Act will:

- Change the way older people access services in their own homes, residential aged care homes and the community.
- Introduce laws to make sure all aged care services are safe and people are treated with respect and have the quality of life they deserve.
- Replace some existing aged care laws, including the Aged Care Act 1997 and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Act 2018.
- Make things clearer for everyone connected to the aged care system.
- Include a Statement of Rights, to replace the current Charter of Aged Care Rights, to put the rights of older people at the centre of their aged care.
- Include a Statement of Principles to guide the behaviours and decision-making processes of government, providers, workers and registered supporters.
- Establish a legal framework for the registration of supporters, which helps to embed supported decision-making across the aged care system.

To help you better understand the changes introduced under the new Act, visit the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing's website to find out more information about the following:

- [aged care reforms](#)
- [changes for aged care workers and volunteers](#)
- [the new regulatory model](#)
- new [learning modules](#).



2 New rights-based approach to aged care

The Statement of Rights and Statement of Principles are central to the new Act. These frameworks are designed to ensure older Australians receive respectful, safe, and high-quality care and support that is person-centred and aligned with their individual needs and preferences.

They are a reference point for the standard of conduct, duties and obligations for when registered providers and care workers (including volunteers) deliver funded aged care services and support.

Read the fact sheet on the rights-based approach to aged care under the new Act, available in [plain language](#) and [Easy Read](#).

2.1 The Statement of Rights

The [Statement of Rights](#) is a fundamental part of the new Act and outlines what rights older people have when accessing aged care services funded by the Australian Government. The Statement of Rights replaces the current Charter of Aged Care Rights on 1 November 2025.

The Statement of Rights sees a shift from a paternalistic, provider-centred model to a person-centred, rights-based model, with explicit expectations for workers (including volunteers) to support autonomy, choice, diversity, inclusion, and dignity of risk.

Volunteers play a key role in upholding older people's rights; this means volunteers and Volunteer Managers need to be aware of and follow the Statement of Rights.

The Statement of Rights includes the right for older people accessing aged care services to:

- make decisions about their own life
- have decisions not just accepted, but respected
- get information and support to help make decisions
- communicate their wishes, needs and preferences
- feel safe and respected
- have their culture and identity respected
- stay connected with their community, including visits by volunteers.

It ensures the identity, culture, spiritually and diversity of an older person, is valued and supported.



The Statement of Rights includes the right of an older person to have the important people in their life (including volunteers) acknowledged and respected.

Older people have the right to be supported by volunteers and to stay connected with them (if they choose), including through safe visitation.

Learn more about what the Statement of Rights means for older people, view this [webinar](#) by the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN).

2.2 The Statement of Principles

The Statement of Principles provides guidance on how aged care should operate such as:

- person-centred care
- valuing the workforce (including volunteers)
- a commitment to continuous improvement.

The Principles will be used to guide the decisions, actions and behaviours of everyone involved in the operation of the aged care system. This includes providers, aged care workers, volunteers, supporters and government agencies.

The Statement of Principles includes:

- putting older people first
- treating older people as unique individuals
- recognising the rights of older people under the Statement of Rights.

More information, including a list of the Statement of Principles, is available in the new Act Policy Manual (resource to be available prior to 1 November 2025).

2.3 New registered supporter role

The new Act puts the rights of older people first. A key change under the new Act is that every older person is presumed to have the ability to make their own decisions.

When the new Act starts, older people can still choose who can support them to make decisions, if they want or need support. These people can be registered supporters.

A registered supporter can help an older person to request, access and understand information and communicate their wishes.



Having a registered supporter does not prevent an older person from doing something they can do themselves. They can continue to request, receive and communicate information and make decisions. Registering as a supporter also does not mean someone can make decisions on behalf of an older person.

Not every older person will want or need someone to support them. Some older people might feel they are already supported by their carers and other significant people in their lives, without needing any of them to become a registered supporter. These people can continue to play an important role in supporting an older person, regardless of whether they are a registered supporter.

An older person's ability to make decisions and communicate their needs and preferences may change from day to day, or over time. Understanding who their registered supporters are and the role they can perform is therefore essential in respecting the older person's rights. A volunteer or Volunteer Manager can ask the aged care provider or older person themselves if they have registered supporters and who they are. Aged care providers and workers (including volunteers) must still go to the older person for decisions about their own care.

For more information, including how a person can become a registered supporter visit [the department's website](#).

2.4 Understanding and supporting the unique needs of each older person

The new Act recognises some older people may have unique needs due to their backgrounds or life experiences. To ensure care is safe, respectful, inclusive, and person-centred, aged care services must be:

- safe and equitable
- culturally appropriate and trauma-aware
- accessible and responsive to individual preferences.

Under Standard 1 of the Aged Care Quality Standards, providers are required to treat all older people with dignity and respect, and to value their identity, culture, spirituality, and diversity. This includes actively considering each person's needs, goals, and preferences in the planning and delivery of care.

The Statement of Rights reinforces these expectations by affirming every older person's right to receive care that is:

- culturally safe and appropriate
- trauma-aware and healing-informed
- supportive of their identity and life experiences.



The new Act also identifies individuals who may require additional consideration to ensure their care experience is inclusive and respectful. Cultural safety means creating an environment where all older people feel respected, understood, and safe to be themselves, with their diverse needs and preferences fully acknowledged and supported.

This may include individuals who:

- are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, including those from stolen generations
- are veterans or war widows
- are from culturally, ethnically or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- are financially or socially disadvantaged
- are experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homeless
- are parents or children who are separated by forced adoption or removal
- are adult survivors of institutional child sexual abuse
- are care-leavers, including Forgotten Australians and former child migrants placed in out of home care
- are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/transgender or other sexual orientations or are gender diverse or bodily diverse
- are an individual with a disability or mental health condition
- are neurodivergent
- are Deaf, deafblind, vision impaired or hard of hearing
- live in rural, remote, or very remote areas.

To find out more about how to support older people from diverse backgrounds and life experiences go to [the Aged Care Diversity Framework](#)





3 Regulation

Under the new Act, all aged care providers must register under a universal registration system.

This system introduces six registration categories, which are based on the type, complexity, and risk of the services provided, not on whether services are delivered by paid staff or volunteers.

The 6 Registration Categories are:

- **Category 1 Home and Community Services**
 - domestic assistance, meals, social support, and transport
- **Category 2 Assistive technology and home modifications**
 - equipment and products, and home adjustments
- **Category 3 Advisory and support services**
 - hoarding and squalor assistance, and social support and community engagement
- **Category 4 Personal care and care support (home or community)**
 - includes allied health and therapy, personal care, and care management
- **Category 5 Nursing and transition care**
 - involves clinical care, wound management, and transitional care
- **Category 6 Residential care (including respite)**
 - covers 24/7 care in residential aged care facilities.

For more information about the service categories and the new regulatory model visit the [department's website](#).





3.1 Aged Care Quality Standards

The Aged Care Quality Standards (Quality Standards) are a set of requirements registered providers must comply with under law if they are registered in Categories 4, 5 and 6. They will commence at the same time as the new Act. They are designed to improve outcomes for older people receiving funded aged care services and set clear expectations for providers in delivering quality aged care.

The diagram below outlines the **7 Quality Standards**

The Quality Standards:

- place older people at the centre of aged care
- support people living with dementia
- are more inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds
- have stronger requirements for clinical care, food and nutrition and governance
- have more protections for older people.

The guidance materials developed by the Commission aim to support providers' and workers (including volunteers) understanding of their obligations and requirements to deliver safe, effective and quality care and support.

Although providers registered in categories 1, 2 and 3 are not subject to audits against the strengthened Quality Standards, it is still expected that they will deliver the same standard for quality of care and support

Providers registered in all categories must comply with other provider obligations under law including:

- Statement of Rights and Statement of Principles
- Code of Conduct for Aged Care (the Code)
- Worker screening
- Complaints, feedback and whistleblowers protections
- Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS).



More information about the Aged Care Quality Standards is on the [department's website](#) and the [Commission's website](#).



3.2 Code of Conduct for aged care

The Code of Conduct for Aged Care (the Code) has been in place since December 2022 and is part of the aged care reforms aimed at ensuring the safety of older people. The Code describes how aged care providers, responsible persons and workers (including volunteers) must behave and treat people receiving aged care.

Volunteers must always act in a respectful, kind and consistent manner in accordance with the eight elements of expected behaviour outlined in the Code:

1. Uphold autonomy and decision-making rights

- act with respect for people's rights to freedom of expression, self-determination and decision-making in accordance with applicable laws and conventions

2. Treat older people with dignity and respect

- act in a way that treats people with dignity and respect and values their diversity

3. Respect older people's privacy

- act with respect for the privacy of people

4. Deliver safe and competent care

- provide care, supports and services safely and competently, with care and skill

5. Act with honesty and transparency

- act with integrity, honesty and transparency

6. Raise and respond to concerns promptly

- promptly take steps to raise and act on concerns about matters that may impact the quality and safety of care, support and services

7. Ensure services are free from harm and misconduct

- provide care, supports and services free from:
 - all forms of violence, discrimination, exploitation, neglect and abuse
 - sexual misconduct.

8. Prevent and respond to harm and misconduct

- take all reasonable steps to prevent and respond to:
 - all forms of violence, discrimination, exploitation, neglect and abuse
 - sexual misconduct.

The Commission monitors and enforces compliance with the Code. Where a provider, responsible person or aged care worker (including a volunteer) fails to comply with the Code, they may be subject to enforcement action by the Commissioner.



More information and resources on the Code are available on the [Commission's website](#).

You can also find a training video and fact sheet for volunteers and Volunteer Managers about the Code on the [Commission's website](#).

3.3 Protection for whistleblowers

A whistleblower is someone who raises concerns about wrongdoing they have seen or experienced in a workplace or organisation.

The new Act will do more to protect whistleblowers than ever before. This means people can report information without fear of punishment or unfair treatment.

Older people and aged care workers (including volunteers) can report a person or organisation who has not followed aged care law, without fear they will be punished or treated unfairly.

A volunteer can make a report in-person, over the phone or in writing, and it can be anonymous. The report can be made to:

- the Aged Care Complaints Commissioner or staff member of the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
- the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
- an aged care provider or worker
- a responsible person of an aged care provider, such as a CEO or Board Member
- a police officer.

If a volunteer receives a protected disclosure, they must take steps to ensure the above protections are afforded to the discloser. See Section 547 of the Act on the definition of a disclosure that qualifies for protection.



For more information, visit the [department's website](#).



3.4 Complaints and feedback

The new Statement of Rights also means older people will be encouraged to share their feedback. This includes being able to make a complaint if they feel their provider has not upheld their rights. This means volunteers need to understand and follow the aged care complaints process.

It is important older people are supported and empowered to provide feedback and make complaints by:

- providing them with information about how to make a complaint
- linking them to advocates or languages services (such as interpreters) who can support them to make a complaint
- supporting them to make a complaint to the Commission, who manages complaints.

To learn more about how to support an older person understand their rights within complaints handling and to access free training for volunteers and Volunteer Managers go to the [Commission's website](#).

3.5 Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS)

The Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) aims to reduce abuse and neglect of older people receiving government funded aged care services.

Under the SIRS, providers must manage and take reasonable action to prevent incidents with a focus on the safety, health, wellbeing and quality of life for older people. Aged care providers must also notify the Commission when reportable incidents happen in their service.

Volunteers do not have to report within SIRS. However, it is important they are aware of what a serious incident is, and if one occurs, they need to let their Volunteer Manager, or another staff member, know as soon as possible. If a volunteer has any concerns they need to talk to their Volunteer Manager.

To find out more about SIRS and to access free training for volunteers and Volunteer Managers go to the [Commission's website](#).



3.6 Worker screening

Worker screening is an important way to protect older people by making sure people are fit to work and volunteer in aged care.

Changes to worker screening will begin from 1 November 2025 in line with the new Act. These changes will mostly impact people working (or volunteering) for Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) providers.

The offences that will stop aged care workers (including volunteers) from working for a CHSP provider will align to the same set of offences that stop you from working for a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program (NATSIFACP) provider. This will apply:

- if you start working for a CHSP provider from 1 November 2025
- if you already work for a CHSP provider and need to renew your police certificate after 1 November 2025.

For other providers, the offences that currently apply will remain the same.

To learn more about worker screening requirements from 1 November 2025, including the offences that will stop people from working as an aged care worker (or volunteer), download our fact sheets for [aged care providers](#) and [aged care workers](#), [guidance for CHSP providers](#) or visit the department's website for [updates on screening requirements](#).

Future arrangements for worker screening

Together with the states and territories, the Australian Government is working towards the introduction of requirements for aged care worker screening to align with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). This will mean more robust screening checks for the aged care sector. Final arrangements are subject to agreement with the states and territories and will not commence before 2026.

Final arrangements are subject to agreement with the states and territories and will not commence before **2026**. Further information on these arrangements will be communicated in the lead up to their commencement and made available on the [department's website](#).



Current arrangements

Until the new worker screening process commences, volunteers **must** comply with current worker screening arrangements.

All volunteers **must have** either a:

- police certificate (not older than 3 years) that does not record certain offences
- NDIS Worker Screening Check

3.7 Training

Aged care worker (including volunteer) training is legislated in the new Act as a condition of registration for providers in Registration Categories 4, 5 and 6 under the Aged Care Quality Standards (Quality Standards).

The Quality Standards include a dedicated outcome to support effective human resource management (Outcome 2.9), which emphasises the importance of providing aged care workers (including volunteers) with suitable training, supervision and support.

Providers in Registration Categories 4, 5 and 6 can demonstrate how they meet this requirement by providing accessible training programs and resources to support volunteers to undertake their role safely and confidently.

Training ensures volunteers:

- provide person centred and rights-based support
- are aware of safety protocols and compliance requirements to keep older people in a safe environment, free from mistreatment and harm
- have the confidence to undertake the volunteer role
- respect and support older people from diverse backgrounds and life experiences.

For training information, guidance and links to training, visit the [department's website](#).





4 What won't be changing for volunteers

4.1 Volunteer activities

Under the new Act there are **no** legislative changes to activities or services provided by volunteers. It is up to the registered aged care provider to determine what roles and activities the volunteers will undertake in their organisation.

4.2 National Registration Scheme

The new training and skills requirements, through a national registration scheme to support personal care workers employed in aged care, will **not** apply to volunteers.

4.3 Definition of an 'aged care worker'

Under the new Act the definition of an 'aged care worker' **will continue** to mean an individual employed or otherwise engaged (including as a volunteer) by the registered provider to deliver funded aged care services.

See [Subsections 11 \(4\) and \(5\)](#) of the new Act

4.4 Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS) volunteers

ACVVS volunteers provide friendship and companionship to older people who are lonely or isolated. In recognition of the important role ACVVS volunteers play in supporting vulnerable older people, registered providers are required under the new Act to allow and facilitate access for ACVVS volunteers to the older person they are matched with.

ACVVS volunteers are managed, screened and trained by an ACVVS community organisation. ACVVS volunteer visitors **should not be** considered as part of the aged care provider volunteer workforce. Aged Care providers **should not** require ACVVS volunteers to undertake additional internal training or enter their personal details into a database.

For further information go to the [ACVVS Guidelines](#).



4.5 Continuous Improvement

We understand you want to provide the best volunteering support possible to older people. We are always happy to hear your feedback and suggestions on how we can better support you to ensure the sustainability of volunteering.



Let us know your thoughts at agedcarevolunteer@health.gov.au.



5 Resources

Aged Care Act 2024

www.legislation.gov.au/C2024A00104/latest/text

Aged Care Code of Conduct

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/for-providers/code-conduct

Aged Care Diversity Framework

www.health.gov.au/our-work/aged-care-diversity-framework-initiative

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQSC)

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/

Aged Care Reforms

www.health.gov.au/our-work/aged-care-reforms

Aged Care Regulatory Model

www.health.gov.au/our-work/new-model-for-regulating-aged-care

Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS) Guidelines

www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/aged-care-volunteer-visitors-scheme-national-guidelines?language=en

Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)

www.health.gov.au/our-work/chsp

Current screening requirements for the aged care workforce

www.health.gov.au/topics/aged-care-workforce/screening-requirements

Fact sheet for providers – Aged care worker screening

www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/fact-sheet-for-providers-aged-care-worker-screening-from-1-july-2025?language=en

Fact sheet for workers – Aged care worker screening

www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/fact-sheet-for-workers-aged-care-worker-screening-from-1-july-2025?language=en

Guidance for CHSP providers

www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-07/the-new-regulatory-model-guidance-for-chsp-providers.pdf#:~:text=This%20guidance%20outlines%20the%20regulatory%20changes%20affecting%20Commonwealth,regulated%20under%20the%20Act%20for%20the%20first%20time



National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program (NATSIFAC)

www.health.gov.au/our-work/national-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-flexible-aged-care-program

New Aged Care Act resources for aged care workers

www.health.gov.au/our-work/aged-care-act/resources/workers

OPAN Statement of Rights

<https://opan.org.au/video/statement-of-rights/>

Plain language fact sheet – older people and the new Aged Care Act

www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/a-new-aged-care-act-for-the-rights-of-older-people

Prepare for the New Aged Care Act 2024 – Education and Training

www.health.gov.au/our-work/aged-care-act/prepare#education-and-training

Registered Supporter Role

www.health.gov.au/our-work/aged-care-act/about#a-new-registered-supporter-role

Registration Categories

www.health.gov.au/our-work/new-model-for-regulating-aged-care/how-it-works

Statement of Rights

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/older-australians/reform-changes-older-people/statement-rights

Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards

www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/strengthened-aged-care-quality-standards-february-2025

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/providers/quality-standards/strengthened-quality-standards

Volunteer Training

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/volunteers-aged-care

www.health.gov.au/topics/aged-care/volunteers/support-and-training

Volunteering in Aged Care

www.health.gov.au/topics/aged-care/volunteers

Whistleblowers protection

www.health.gov.au/our-work/aged-care-act/about#protection-for-whistleblowers



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