

Evaluation of younger people in residential aged care (YPIRAC) initiatives – Summary report

The evaluation sought to understand progress to date, to inform future actions for the Australian Government

- The Australian Government established several initiatives between 2019 and 2022 to help achieve a target of 'no people under the age of 65 living in residential aged care by January 2025' and respond to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Safety and Quality. The focus of the Australian Government's response was helping younger people navigate the system.
- The number of younger people in residential aged care (RAC) reduced from 5,513 in September 2018 to 1,470 in December 2023. This was driven by a reduction in the number of younger people entering RAC, younger people ageing out and deaths. While there has been a reduction in the number of younger people living in RAC, the target will not be achieved.
- The evaluation team engaged over 300 stakeholders, including younger people, families, disability workers, health workers, aged care workers, aged care assessors and states and territories. Data from the NDIA, Department of Health and Aged Care and Ability First Australia was also analysed.

YPIRAC initiatives have contributed to reducing the number of younger people in RAC

- The key drivers leading to a reduction in younger people entering RAC are 1) access to navigation supports; 2) the supply of alternative accommodation options; and 3) changes to the principles and guidelines that required alternatives be explored and exhausted before access to commonwealth funded aged care services.
- New referral pathways have helped younger people to find support, but there continues to be examples of poor collaboration across the health, disability and aged-care service systems.
- Targeted efforts in data publication and research have increased the Australian Government's understanding of the YPIRAC cohort and their needs and preferences. Regular reporting has improved accountability but there continues to be disconnect between government jurisdictions.
- The effectiveness of each initiative in reducing the number of younger people in RAC is impacted by a younger person's timely access to age-appropriate alternatives and their preference to explore alternatives.
- Progress is not consistent across the YPIRAC cohort with those over the age of 60, those with co-occurring mental illness, those not eligible for NDIS, those living in a regional or remote area or those living with a life-limiting illness being more likely to still enter RAC.

A case management approach will continue to reduce the number of younger people in RAC

The evaluation makes eight recommendations to deliver on the government's commitment to reduce the number of younger people in RAC. The number of younger people in RAC represent a decreasing group of people with diverse needs. As such, a more tailored and targeted approach is required to source viable alternatives.

The recommendations can be sorted into three groups:

1 Establish case management approach

Create a multi-agency case management panel in each jurisdiction as a mechanism to share data, identify and commission responses specific to the younger person.

2 Improve existing processes

Ensure younger people have a consistent experience across their journey to explore age-appropriate accommodation and support options, in addition to transitioning out of RAC, through well-documented and standardised processes.

3 Prepare for legislative changes

In planning for the new Aged Care Act, consider refining the definition of exceptional circumstances and allowing for a transition period prior to implementation.