



Registered supporters: glossary of key terms

Disclaimer

This glossary has been published to support commencement of the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)* (the Act). The information in this glossary is applicable from 1 November 2025.

The Act and related rules take precedence over this glossary, which should be read alongside them. The guidance provided in this glossary about registered supporters does not constitute legal advice.

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing will update this glossary, periodically and/or as required.

This glossary is one part of the [registered supporters policy library](#). Please refer to the online version of this glossary in the registered supporter policy library located on the department's website to ensure you have the most recent version.

Version history

Version	Date published	Commentary on changes
1	September 2025	First version released.
2	April 2026	Definitions of 'will and preferences', 'supporter guardian' and 'capacity' amended, as well as other editorial changes, to ensure consistency of language across the registered supporters policy library; no policy changes made.

Key terms

Abuse: Acts or omissions causing or likely to cause direct or indirect harm to a person or group of people. Abuse can occur as a single incident or repeated incidents or a pattern of behaviour over a period of time. It can include physical violence, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, cultural abuse, and spiritual abuse. Neglect is a type of abuse that involves inaction.

Accessibility measures: Measures that enable the use of environments, facilities, services, products and information in a way that suits the needs of people.

Active, appointed decision maker: In policy, 'active, appointed decision maker' is the term used for a person who has active, decision-making authority for an older person under a Commonwealth, state or territory arrangement. This includes those people considered a 'guardian etc' under the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)*. If, in registering as a supporter, a person relied on their authority as an active, appointed decision maker for an older person (for example, the person is also an enduring attorney for the older person they are registered to support), they are recorded as a supporter guardian for Information Communications Technology (ICT) purposes. Active, appointed decision makers can only make decisions for an older person within the scope of their legal authority under a Commonwealth, state or territory arrangement. These may provide authority for personal, health, financial and/or medical treatment matters.

Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth): The primary federal legislation which provides for the delivery of funded aged care services to individuals under the Commonwealth aged care system.

Aged care providers: Entities registered under the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)* to provide aged care and services to older Australians. They include Residential Aged Care providers, Home Care Package providers, Commonwealth Home Support Program providers, and flexible care providers such as short-term restorative care. An aged care provider may be referred to as registered provider under the Act.

Aged care worker: An individual employed or otherwise engaged (including as a volunteer) by:

- a registered aged care provider, to deliver funded aged care services, or
- an associated provider, and is conducting activities under the associated provider's arrangement with a registered aged care provider relating to the registered provider's delivery of funded aged care services.

An aged care worker also includes individuals who are registered aged care providers.

Aged care services: Captures a wide range of Australian Government-funded aged care services offered by aged care providers such as accommodation, clinical care, social support, transportation, and assistance with daily living in a residential care setting, home, or in the community.

Aged care system: Refers to a set of interrelated components and people working together to provide support and aged care services to older people as part of an interconnecting network in accordance with the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)*.

Agent organisation: An organisation approved by the department, whose employees can be engaged to help an older person navigate aged care. These employees are called agents. An agent must support the older person in a professional capacity. A family member or friend cannot be an agent. An agent can be involved in discussions with an older person, access and update some of their information, but cannot make decisions about an older person's care or services when liaising with My Aged Care.

Appointment: Used in the context of appointed decision makers under Commonwealth, state or territory arrangements. An active Commonwealth, state or territory appointment may give a person legal power to make particular decisions for another person.

Authorised: Used in the context of appointed decision makers under Commonwealth, state or territory arrangements. A person who is authorised to make a decision for another person has an active, legal appointment that can be shown as proof of that authority. Their authority is limited to the scope of authority afforded by their legal appointment. Being a registered supporter does not grant a person decision-making authority for an older person.

Autonomy: A person's right and freedom to make decisions, control their life and exercise choice. A person's ability to exercise autonomy is affected by their context and sense of themselves as a person with autonomy.

Available: Used in the context of appointments of decision makers under Commonwealth, state or territory arrangements. Available means that the appointed decision maker is not facing any obstacles to acting in their role, either from an accessibility perspective (for example, their current location or access does not prevent them from acting on behalf of another) or otherwise (for example, they have the capacity and ability to act in their role as an active, appointed decision maker).

Best interests: A decision-making approach that is used in some substitute decision-making arrangements. A best interests approach requires the appointed decision maker to ask themselves whether they believe a decision is in the best interests of the person who the decision is about. In doing so, the appointed decision maker may have to:

- consider whether the decision is objectively in the best interests of the person who the decision is about, or
- consider the decisions, will, and preferences of the person who the decision is about.

A common alternative to a best interests approach is a will and preferences approach that requires an appointed decision maker to consider and act in line with the known or likely will and preferences of the person who the decision is about, without any consideration to the person's best interests.

The approach that an appointed decision maker must take depends on the Commonwealth, state or territory arrangement under which they have legal decision-making authority. These are substitute decision-making approaches.

The new registered supporter role is not a substitute decision-making role and instead uses supported decision-making principles to help an older person make or communicate their own aged care decisions.

Cancellation: Used in the context of System Governor cancellation of registered supporters. If certain conditions are met, the System Governor can decide to cancel a registration or can action the request of the older person or their registered supporter to cancel a registration.

Capacity: Capacity is a legal concept referring to a person's ability to make a particular decision and to have that decision recognised and respected by the law. This includes a person's ability to make decisions about themselves. Capacity considers that a person's decision-making ability can fluctuate. Assessments of decision-making ability by medical professionals usually contribute to legal considerations of a person's capacity.

Carer: See definition at section 7 of the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)*. A carer means a person who provides personal care, support and assistance to another individual who needs it because that other individual is an older individual. A carer is not a person who provides the personal care, support and assistance to the individual as an aged care worker of a registered provider, or in the course of doing voluntary work for a charitable, welfare or community organisation, including as an aged care volunteer visitor, or as part of the requirements of a course of education or training.

Client: Used in the context of aged care, the client is the older person seeking to receive or currently receiving aged care services. This term is generally used only in the context of Information Communications Technology (ICT) systems.

Communicate: To share information with others. There are many ways for a person to communicate, including by written, verbal, or non-verbal expression. Communication

includes non-conventional methods of communication and can involve the use of assistive technology.

Complaint: A disclosure, concern, grievance, information or allegation about abuse or wrongdoing by a registered supporter, or about the older person or registered supporter's engagement with My Aged Care.

Conflict of interest: A conflict of interest arises if a registered supporter's personal interests or obligations interfere with, could compromise, or may influence the registered supporter's ability to carry out their role under the Act. This could include a conflict between the older person's interests and the registered supporter's interests. A conflict of interest that cannot be avoided or managed can call into question the registered supporter's ability to be impartial, selfless and act only in accordance with the older person's known will and preferences. Conflicts of interest can be real, perceived or potential.

Consent: Free, voluntary and informed agreement between people. Consent must be free from duress and must be current and specific to each thing that the person is agreeing to. Informed consent can be achieved through a process of communication, discussion and support in decision-making.

Consult: Used in the context of registered supporters, consult means to seek input, information, or advice from another person or group of people.

Culturally and linguistically diverse: Describes communities with diverse languages, ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, traditions, societal structures and religions. This includes people with a different heritage or linguistic background than dominant Australian culture and language, people with dual heritage, and people who are migrants and refugees.

Decision-making ability: Ability of a person to make a particular decision with the provision of relevant and appropriate support at a time when a decision needs to be made.

Guardians etc: This overarching term is used in the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)* and refers to a person who has decision-making authority for an older person by virtue of an appointment under a Commonwealth, state or territory arrangement. This can include by an order of a tribunal or court (e.g., guardianship or administration orders) or by appointment by the older person themselves (e.g., an enduring power of attorney). The *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)* provides that a person must not do anything on behalf of an older person under, or for the purposes of, the Act unless that person is a 'guardian etc' who is authorised to act on behalf of the older person.

A guardian is a person or officer appointed, often by a tribunal, to make particular decisions on behalf of another person in relation to their health treatments, accommodation, services and other lifestyle matters. In policy documents, the term 'active, appointed decision maker' is used to refer someone who may be recognised under the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)* as a 'guardians etc'.

Jointly and severally: This is a condition that is in force when there are multiple supporters registered for one person. This means that registered supporters can act either together or separately.

Legal capacity: A person's decisions and actions being recognised and respected by the law. It refers to both legal standing (i.e. the ability to hold rights and duties, and to be recognised as a legal person) and legal agency (i.e. the ability to exercise these rights and duties and to perform acts with legal effects).

My Aged Care: The service that is the starting point for accessing Australian Government-funded aged care services. My Aged Care receives written, phone or face-to-face requests to register an older person's supporter and is the mechanism for the older person and those who support them to record engagements and decisions relating to the System Governor and the department.

Neglect: A type of abuse that uses inaction to cause harm or distress to a person. In relation to older people, it is the failure to meet an older person's basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, warmth or essential medical care.

Notification: Used in the context of System Governor notifications. A notification is the communication of information to an older person, their supporters, and any other person who the notification relates to. Depending on the circumstances, a notification may be in the form of a physical letter, an email, or an SMS (text).

Older person: Used in the context of aged care, older person refers to an individual with care needs who is aged 65 or over (or aged 50 or over and an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, or who is homeless or at risk of homelessness) and is eligible to undergo an aged care needs assessment by an approved needs assessor. Eligibility includes living in Australia.

Other people who support an older person: Refers to any person who supports an older person in their decision-making. These people can promote older peoples' rights by increasing connections, relationships and visibility in the wider community. This can include friends and family, neighbours, carers, volunteers, aged care workers, aged care providers, advocates, navigation services, and health professionals. If these people are not registered supporters, they can still provide support to an older person, with the consent of the older person. However, they do not have the duties of a supporter under the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)*.

Presumption of capacity: Refers to the concept that all persons should have their capacity presumed. This means that other people, for example registered supporters, workers, health professionals and carers, should assume in the first instance that an older person can make their own decisions and do things themselves. An assessment of capacity would only occur if something was observed in the older person's behaviour that makes themselves or others question their capacity.

Registered supporter: An umbrella term used in policy to refer to any person registered as a supporter under section 37(1) of the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)*. There are three labels used to describe registered supporters: supporter, supporter lite, or supporter guardian. Registered supporters are responsible for understanding their role and duties and acting in line with the known will and preferences of the older person they are supporting.

Registration: Used in the context of the System Governor's ability to register people as supporters. This involves the act of recording the details of a supporter, supporter lite, or supporter guardian on the System Governor's IT system.

State or territory tribunal: A tribunal is different from a court. It is less formal but can still hear cases, consider evidence, and make decisions. Each state and territory has a tribunal that has responsibility for hearing applications for guardianship or administration orders (i.e., substitute decision-making orders) or making decisions about decision-making appointments (e.g., enduring power of attorney appointments). Each tribunal has its own procedures. Appeals of decisions by tribunals can be made to a higher court. An example of a tribunal is the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, known as NCAT.

Substitute decision-making: Refers to a range of processes and approaches that involve a person making decisions on another person's behalf. The substitute decision-making approach that an appointed decision maker must take depends on the Commonwealth, state or territory arrangement under which they have legal decision-making authority.

Support: Actions, access, practices, strategies or resources that promote the participation and inclusion of older people in society. This includes older people making decisions about their lives. Supports may involve a range of persons, services, and assistive technologies. Supports can also leverage universal design and accessibility measures and recognise non-conventional methods of communication.

Supported decision-making: Refers to processes and approaches that enable people to exercise their legal capacity, including making or communicating their decisions, will, and preferences, by provision of the support they may want or need to do so. This support may involve a range of persons, services, and assistive technologies.

Supported decision-making does not mean making a decision for, or on behalf of, another person.

Supporter: A supporter is the term used, primarily for Information Communications Technology (ICT) purposes, to identify a supporter who has been registered under the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)* in the following circumstances: the older person consented to the registration of the supporter, and to that registered supporter also being given information or documents that may or must be given to the older person under, or for the purposes of, the Act.

Supporter guardian: A supporter guardian is the term used, primarily for Information Communications Technology (ICT) purposes, to identify a person who is registered by the System Governor as a supporter under the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)* and who, to become registered, relied on their active, decision-making authority for the older person by virtue of a Commonwealth, state or territory appointment. An older person is not required to consent to the registration of a person as a supporter guardian. A supporter guardian will automatically be given information about the older person. This is information that, under the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)*, may or must be provided to an older person. They are bound by the duties of supporters, as well as any duties under the relevant Commonwealth, state or territory arrangements.

Supporter lite: A supporter lite is the term used, primarily for Information Communications Technology (ICT) purposes, to identify a supporter who has been registered under the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)* in the following circumstances: the older person consented to the registration of the supporter, but not to that registered supporter also being given information or documents that may or must be given to the older person under, or for the purposes of, the Act.

Suspension: Used in the context of the System Governor's power to suspend registered supporters. If the System Governor believes that there are reasons that a supporter's registration should be cancelled, the System Governor must first suspend that person and provide them with an opportunity to explain why their registration should not be cancelled. While suspended, the person cannot exercise any powers as a registered supporter, granted by the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)*.

System Governor: The decision maker identified by the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)* as responsible for making decisions relating to registered supporters. This includes decisions to register supporters, and to suspend and cancel the registration of supporters. The System Governor is also responsible for requesting, receiving and considering any information that might justify the suspension and cancellation of a supporter's registration, as well as whether the registered supporter's behaviour would be considered an offence under the Act.

Universal design: A design intended to meet the needs of as many users as possible. Universal design prioritises designing for diversity, inclusion, and equity. It ensures that the design of products, services, and environments is accessible and usable by everyone, regardless of age, size, ability, or disability. The seven principles of universal design are equitable use, flexibility in use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and the size and space for approach and use.

Will and preferences: Means a decision-making approach that is referred to in Article 12(4) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities but is not defined or explained.

What the term ‘will and preferences’ means is a contentious topic in academic research literature and human rights discourse. Some argue that ‘will’ and ‘preferences’ are two separate constructs driven by different neurological and cognitive processes that may lead to different decisions. Others argue that the expression of preferences is the means to achieve the will of a person. There is general agreement that will and preferences tend to align, even if they are driven by different processes. However, this is not always true of all older people, and those supporting an older person must consider this on a case-by-case basis when acting to support the older person.

The academic debate on the meaning of ‘will and preferences’ is important in the context of substitute decision-making and supporting people with complex neurological and cognitive conditions that impact their ability to make particular decisions.¹

A person’s will and preferences can also change. If an older person is currently expressing a will or preference that is different to their previously expressed will and preference, the most current expression of their will or preferences can be considered their known will and preferences.

There are many ways to think about a person’s will and preferences, and this is often different for each person. One way of thinking about these terms is:

- A person’s will is grounded in rational-deliberative processes, requiring the ability to reflect on the consequences of the action within the context of a person’s goals and values. These may include life goals, political perspectives, emotional and spiritual

¹ However, in the context of the role of registered supporters under the *Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)*, it is most important to remember that registered supporters can only support an older person, receive information, or communicate an older person's decision if this is in line with their known will and preferences. An older person’s known will and preferences means what the registered supporter knows the older person currently wants, now or in the future.

development and views, and gender and sexual identity. A person's will may continue to evolve with changing contexts.

- A person's preferences are grounded in affective-impulsive processes, sensitive to non-verbal, pre-conscious and contextual factors. They are choices expressed at a particular point in time, whether verbally, or behaviourally.

The terms 'will' and 'preferences' are also regularly connected with 'rights' in the sense that supported decision-making is about giving effect to the decisions, will, preferences and rights of a person wanting decision-making support.

In the registered supporter context, registered supporters must act in a manner that promotes the older person's will and preferences. The role of a registered supporter is not to make decisions on behalf of an older person, even if those decisions are made in line with the older person's actual or likely will and preferences.