



Australian Government
**Department of Health,
Disability and Ageing**

Meeting Brief

MB25-000899

Version (1)

Date sent to MO: 12/06/2025

To: Minister Rae

Subject: MEETING BRIEF – OLDER PERSONS ADVOCACY NETWORK (OPAN)

Comments:

Contact Officer:	s47E(c) s47F	A/g Director, Systems Strategy and Network Support Branch, Service Delivery Division	s47E(c) s47F
Clearance Officer:	Travis Power	Assistant Secretary, Ageing Policy, Systems and Evidence Branch Systems, Engagement and Contributions Division	s47E(c) s47F

Date / Time: Friday 13 June 2025, 10:30 AM to 11:00 AM

Meeting Type/Location: Microsoft Teams

Traditional Custodians: Wathaurong (WO-thuh-rong) Country (Electorate Office)

Desired Outcomes: Maintain open communication and strong relationship with OPAN, particularly in relation to the upcoming aged care reform rollout.

Key Attendees/Speakers:	Title:	Organisation:	Mobile No:
Craig Gear	CEO	OPAN	s47F
Diana Vizard	Strategic Engagement Manager	OPAN	

Purpose:

To maintain strong engagement with OPAN following the deferral of the commencement of the *Aged Care Act 2024* (Act) from 1 July to 1 November 2025.

Key Matters/Issues:

- On 4 June 2025, you and Minister Butler announced a delay to the commencement of the new Act to 1 November 2025.
- OPAN has stated it 'reluctantly supported the delay' through a media release. Mr Gear was quoted within the statement saying:

‘Over the past weeks, it has become increasingly apparent that, while the macro design of the reform is solid, older people don’t have the necessary information to make informed choices at an individual level, particularly around the new Support at Home program. We are also concerned that the appropriate systems aren’t yet in place to ensure continuity of care and services for older people during the transition’. A copy of the OPAN press release is at **Attachment B**.

- s47E(d) [REDACTED]
- The Transition Taskforce (Mr Gear is a member of) has discussed a number of issues relating to new Support at Home Program service agreements. This includes the timing for means testing outcomes to inform new service agreements if contribution assessments are not available prior.
 - The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing has provided advice, including proposed templates and checklists, to support providers having discussions with older people and enter into new service agreements.

Sensitivities:

s47E(d)

Background:

- Mr Gear is a member of the Transition Taskforce and the National Aged Care Advisory Council.
- Mr Gear was invited to Deputy Secretary Sonja Stewart’s ad-hoc Aged Care Transition Taskforce meeting on Wednesday 4 June 2025.
- Ms Vizard is OPAN’s Strategic Engagement Manager, and leads its marketing, communications and engagement team.

National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP)

- OPAN deliver NACAP through its network of nine member organisations across Australia (one in each state and the ACT, and two in the NT being in Darwin and Alice Springs).
- The program provides free, independent, and confidential aged care advocacy support and information to older people to help them understand and exercise their aged care rights, seek aged care services that suit their needs and find solutions to issues they may be experiencing.
- Total current funding provided to OPAN for the delivery of NACAP is \$160.17 million (GST exclusive) over four years (2021-22 to 2024-25).

- On 24 September 2024, Minister expenditure of up to \$190.1 million (GST exclusive) over four years (2025-26 to 2028-29) was approved for continuation of the NACAP.
- The department is in the process of finalising the next agreement which is planned to commence on 1 July 2025.

Attachments:

- A. Biographies
- B. OPAN media on the deferral of the Aged Care Act 2024 commencement
- C. s47C 

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Attachment A

Biographies

	Mr Craig Gear OAM Mr Gear was appointed CEO of the Older Persons Advocacy Network in 2018. Mr Gear has a Master of Nursing (in Critical Care) and over 20 years of clinical and senior management experience within the health and human services sectors, previously serving as Board Chair at Seniors Rights Service. Mr Gear is passionate about connecting and improving the health system for all Australians. He also has an insider's perspective of the challenges involved and has been using that experience to drive better outcomes for at-risk communities for more than 20 years.
	Ms Diana Vizard Ms Vizard leads OPAN's Marketing, Communications and Engagement team and manages the organisation's relationship with key sector stakeholders and allied peaks. Ms Vizard also oversees production on OPAN webinars and other awareness-raising events, and leads the Marketing, Communications, and Education Advisory Group, which works together to ensure consistent messaging and identify initiatives at a national level.

Attachment B

Why OPAN supports delay to new Aged Care Act

June 5, 2025

The Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) has reluctantly supported a 4-month delay to the implementation of the new rights-based Aged Care Act announced today because it was becoming increasingly apparent that older people didn't have access to the level of detail they needed to make informed decisions about their aged care.

In the weeks leading up to the scheduled roll-out of this historic piece of legislation, on 1 July 2025, there was mounting concern and confusion. Service providers had made repeated calls for the Australian Government to delay the start of the new Support at Home program, saying they were not ready and needed more details from government to deliver it. Members of OPAN's own National Older Persons Reference Group publicly backed this position.

Aged care advocates were reporting an increase in calls from older people who were worried they wouldn't be able to afford the aged care services they needed to remain living independently at home. Almost 4,000 older people, family members, advocates, and service providers registered last week for OPAN's webinar on changes to aged care costs and fees for in-home care. Between them, they submitted 400 questions.

While the macro design of the reform is solid, it has become increasingly apparent that older people don't have the detailed information they need to give their informed consent. Last week, OPAN and COTA Australia wrote to the government to give their in-principle support for a short delay. Overall, it's the right decision. The joint letter raised older people's concerns around the lack of information about costs, fees and services under the new Support at Home program and the lack of appropriate systems to ensure continuity of care and services during the transition.

Until this point, OPAN had been steadfast in its call for the Act to be implemented, as promised, on 1 July 2025.

Why? Because the Act and the funding model that accompanies it are a package deal – we can't have one without the other. And while OPAN doesn't agree with everything that's in that package, we believe it's significantly better than the one we have.

Overall, the new rights-based Act:

- delivers faster services to the community
- gives older people more choice and control over their aged care
- provides stronger protections
- manages complaints in an easier and more respectful manner
- has significant consequences for providers who do the wrong thing.

While it's not the Act the Aged Care Royal Commission recommended, OPAN supports the roll out of the new legislation on 1 November 2025 without further delay. Older people have already waited far too long for their rights to be upheld.

Now is not the time to take our collective foot off the pedal. The changes push out the timeline for older people to receive more timely and rights-focused aged care. OPAN will continue to hold the government and providers to account.

We are calling for the release of a minimum 20,000 additional home care packages during the four-month delay to reduce the current 83,000 people waiting up to 11 months to receive the appropriate level of home care.

Inadequate in-home care support pushes older people prematurely into residential aged care.

The extra 4-month window of time does, however, enable us to address a number of outstanding issues prior to the Act's implementation.

Our immediate 5 key areas of focus are:

- equitable, accessible hardship provisions with an easier process that ensures a rapid response
- the removal of co-contributions on personal and respite care
- timely assessment and reassessments for aged care services and a significant reduction in waiting times for home care packages
- holding providers who are charging unreasonable prices for their services to account
- service agreements.

Government, service providers, peak bodies, older people with lived experience of aged care, and other key sector stakeholders must work together to ensure the smooth roll out of the Act on 1 November so older people get the rights-based aged care they deserve.

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Minister	Minister Rae
PDR Number	MB25-000899
Subject	**URGENT** Meeting Brief - OPAN
Contact Officer	s47E(c) s47F [REDACTED]
Clearance Officer	Travis Power s47E(c) s47F [REDACTED]
Division/Branch	Ageing and Aged Care Systems, Engagement and Contributions Division
Has Budget Branch been consulted if there are financial implications?	Not Applicable

Adviser/DLO comments:

Returned to Dept for:

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