



Australian Government
Department of Health

NATIONAL AGED CARE ADVOCACY FRAMEWORK

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1. Introduction

The National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP) is funded by the Australian Government under the Aged Care Act 1997 (the Act). NACAP provides free, independent and confidential advocacy support, education and information to older people (and their representatives) receiving, or seeking to receive, Australian Government funded aged care services.

2. National Aged Care Advocacy Framework

The National Aged Care Advocacy Framework (the Framework) guides the provider(s) of NACAP in the delivery of high quality and nationally consistent aged care advocacy services.

The Framework outlines objectives, guiding principles, program activities, target groups and the mechanisms to ensure that program activities remain consistent, accessible, flexible, innovative and of a high quality.

The Framework will be applied in conjunction with key program documents, including:

- National Aged Care Advocacy Program Guidelines
- NACAP Funding Agreement and approved activity work plans
- The *Aged Care Act 1997*, including the Grant Principles 2014.

The Framework is intended to be a living document and will be reviewed by the Department of Health (Health) in collaboration with the NACAP provider(s) to ensure it remains relevant and appropriate within the context of a changing aged care system and consumer needs.

3. NACAP Objective

The aim of the NACAP is to support access to quality aged care services which meet an individual's needs through provision of independent, confidential advocacy support.

4. NACAP Activities

The objectives of the NACAP will be met through the delivery of the following program activities:

- independent and individually focused advocacy support delivered to older people (including their families or representatives)
- the provision of independent information to support older people (including their families or representatives)
- the delivery of education sessions promoting aged care consumer rights to older people (including their families or representatives)
- the delivery of education sessions to aged care providers and staff promoting consumer rights and aged care provider responsibilities, including through online/digital systems.

Through these activities, NACAP aims to support consumers so that they:

- can effectively interact with the aged care system
- better transition between aged care services
- are enabled and empowered to make informed decisions about the care they receive
- can exercise their right to choice in accessing and receiving aged care services
- have their aged care rights better understood, recognised and upheld
- have their aged care needs better met
- increase their capacity to self-advocate
- can resolve problems or complaints with aged care providers in relation to the aged care services they receive
- know their care rights and responsibilities
- are not subjected to elder abuse within the aged care system
- can address issues that impact their ability to live in their own homes, with the aim of preventing premature admission to aged care facilities and focussing on wellness and reablement.

5. NACAP Guiding Principles

NACAP advocacy is guided by relevant rights-based principles and legislation, including but not limited to:

- The United Nations Charter of Human Rights and the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (1991)
- The Charters of Care Recipients' Rights and Responsibilities¹
- Australian Consumer Law.

In addition, NACAP advocacy services:

- are independent of service delivery and free of any real or perceived conflict of interest
- are available to consumers at all points along the aged care journey from initial consideration of, and contact with the aged care system
- ensure consumers are placed at the centre of the process, and the advocate acts at the direction of the consumer
- recognise carers, family members, 'family of choice' and other representatives of aged care consumers as partners in care as well as partners in advocacy
- ensure information, education and advocacy services are accessible to all potential consumers, with strategies in place to overcome barriers to access for those with diverse needs

¹ At the time of writing there are four Charters relating to the rights of aged care recipients; residential care, home care and short-term restorative care however Health is consulting on the development of a single charter of aged care rights.

- embed a strong emphasis on proactive / preventative advocacy by educating and strengthening the capacity of consumers, their representatives and the general community
- educate and build the capacity of service providers to embed the rights of consumers in service provision policies and practices
- use proven and tested practices delivered to a high standard by a competent and skilled workforce
- remain informed and up to date about the aged care system and broader sector environment
- contribute to other quality assurance mechanisms within the aged care system through analysis of the systemic trends which emerge through individual advocacy work
- have strong governance and management systems which ensure services are designed for safety, effectiveness and efficiency
- embrace the concept and practice of continuous improvement
- develop and maintain a transparent mechanism for dealing with complaints
- maintain constructive, positive relationships with key stakeholders which allow for collaborative approaches to improving quality of care for aged care recipients, while upholding the independence of the program.

6. NACAP Target Groups

Individuals eligible to receive advocacy services, information and education services through NACAP include:

- people receiving Australian Government funded aged care services
- people seeking to receive Australian Government funded aged care services (this may include prior to receiving an aged care assessment)
- families or representatives of the above.

The program will focus on people living with dementia, a mental health condition, a disability, cognitive decline and those who identify as being from special needs groups, as defined in the Act:

- people from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- people who live in rural or remote areas
- people who are financially or socially disadvantaged
- people who are veterans of the Australian Defence Force or an allied defence force including the spouse, widow or widower of a veteran
- people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless
- people who are care leavers (which includes Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations)
- parents separated from their children by forced adoption or removal

- people from lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/transgender and intersex (LGBTI) communities.

NACAP also delivers education on consumer rights and responsibilities to providers of Australian Government funded aged care services.

For the purpose of the NACAP, Australian Government funded aged care services are defined as:

- Residential aged care
- Home Care Packages
- Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) services
- Commonwealth Continuity of Support (CoS) Program
- Commonwealth funded dementia services
- Flexible care services, including:
 - the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program
 - the Innovation Pool Program
 - Multi-purpose services
 - Transition care
 - Short-term restorative care.

7. National Consistency

NACAP is a nationally standardised, operationally efficient and highly connected service. This will be achieved through a unified approach to how NACAP services are:

- defined and described
- accessed and delivered
- measured and reported
- marketed and communicated
- engaged in quality improvement.

The results of this coordinated approach will be a nationally consistent service which enables the consumer experience to be similar nationwide, whilst still responding to local issues and needs.

8. Accessibility

As a national program, NACAP provides services to a range of people from individually and geographically diverse backgrounds, including vulnerable populations. NACAP providers will be required to provide advocacy services to consumers and providers in a nationally consistent manner that also offers the flexibility required to accommodate the individual demographic, cultural, religious, physical and linguistic needs of individual consumers.

NACAP embraces the development of innovative approaches for maximising the reach of the NACAP and ensuring equity of access for all consumers. This includes but is not limited to:

- an expansion of physical sites
- extended hours on the 1800 toll free phone service
- development of an enhanced program website for general enquiry, interactive services and general information
- introduction of digital education resources
- program materials developed in a range of formats including electronic, audio, large print, simple English and language translations.

Strategies aimed at increasing the accessibility of services and supports for NACAP target groups, as defined in Section 6 include, but are not limited to:

- recruiting and fostering diversity within the NACAP workforce through the employment of staff identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and/or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI)
- providing staff with cultural awareness and cross-cultural competency training to ensure appropriate and sensitive engagement with consumers from the identified target groups
- coordinated outreach trips aimed at engaging consumers in rural and remote locations including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- access to Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) for people from CALD backgrounds
- development of dedicated educational and promotional materials for NACAP target groups
- networking and collaborating with relevant industry bodies, local community leaders and organisations supporting NACAP target groups
- providing support in settings and formats that are respectful of individual and community preferences
- encouraging diverse consumers to participate in the co-design of NACAP services (refer to section 11).

9. Networks and Linkages

NACAP provider(s) will build and maintain effective networks and linkages with relevant agencies at the local, state/territory and national levels. These connections will assist in maximising the reach and understanding of NACAP, establish referral pathways and support service access.

Networks and linkages will be developed and maintained with key stakeholders within the broader aged care service system and with a range of other key service areas offering supports outside the scope of NACAP (e.g. housing, health and legal services).

Networks and linkages will include, but will not be limited to, the following agencies and services:

- My Aged Care contact centre and associated face to face assessment organisations, including Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACATs) and Regional Assessment Services (RAS)
- Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
- approved providers of Commonwealth funded aged care services
- peak organisations representing aged care providers
- organisations representing aged care consumers including those from special needs groups, as defined under the Act
- the National Aged Care Alliance (NACA)
- organisations representing people with disability, including funded providers of the National Disability Advocacy Program
- relevant Australian-Government funded programs (e.g. the Community Visitors Scheme, Financial Information Service)
- the broader community and health sectors, including Primary Health Networks (PHNs), GPs, hospitals and allied health professionals
- community legal, public advocacy and guardianship services.

Health will assist the NACAP provider(s) in building direct relationships with a range of areas within Health and facilitate linkages with other relevant Australian Government funded programs.

10. Data and Reporting

NACAP data will be used to monitor and evaluate the performance of the program against the following Activity Performance Measures:

- number of advocacy and information cases for older people receiving or seeking to receive aged care services and/or their representatives
- number of education sessions on resident rights and responsibilities provided to older people receiving or seeking to receive residential aged care services and/or their representatives
- number of education sessions on recipient rights and responsibilities provided to older people receiving or seeking to receive Home Care Services and/or their representatives
- number of advocacy cases for older people receiving or seeking to receive Australian Government aged care services for all special needs groups (equal or exceeding 20%)
- number of education sessions for older people receiving or seeking to receive Australian Government aged care services delivered to all special needs groups (equal or exceeding 20%).

Qualitative and quantitative data will also be used to assist in the identification of unmet demand, consumer trends and experiences, and to inform policy development and systemic reform within the broader aged care sector.

11. Quality Assurance

Quality assurance measures will be reflected in the delivery of all NACAP activities. Quality assurance measures are to include the development of national:

- quality management systems
- risk management systems
- information systems
- policies and procedure manuals.

The consumer experience will be at the forefront of all quality assurance measures, with consumer feedback informing opportunities for continuous quality improvement.

A Consumer Reference Group, comprising aged care advocacy consumers and their carers/representatives will be engaged to:

- advise and co-design further improvements to NACAP services
- provide guidance on additional and innovative projects designed to respond to emerging need and unmet demand.

12. Resources and Marketing

Promotion of NACAP is the joint responsibility of Health, the NACAP provider(s), peak bodies and representative organisations in the aged care sector and other relevant funded bodies.

NACAP marketing and resources will provide consumers and key stakeholders with nationally consistent information in formats that are accessible, easy to understand and responsive to the diverse needs of NACAP target groups.

13. NACAP Review and Evaluation

The NACAP is subject to review and evaluation in the grant funding period. This will be used to inform future funding decisions and aged care advocacy policy more broadly.

