

VOLUNTEERS NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2025

The new Aged Care Act comes into place on 1st November, three months after the original start date. There are still issues, and all providers are scrambling to be ready. However, as the last delay cost the Government \$1 Billion (*from the planned \$18 Billion in savings they are expecting from these changes*), I cannot see another delay happening. If there are issues going forward (a new IT system, many waiting for services), and with such a huge change taking place, they will have to fix issues as we move forward.

There are growing calls for the Government to make some important changes before the start date, which I cannot see happening either with only 25 days until the scheme starts!

A recent article by Prof Kathy Eager "Government is planning hardship for older Australians living at home" (September 25, 2025) highlights the issues which are present as we prepare and will certainly be there once we start. I am presenting some of her paper to you.

Prof Eager says that 'Aged Care has again been in the media for all the wrong reasons. Two failures are attracting particular attention.

- One is the waiting time to receive aged care at home, with 200,00 people waiting in the queue.
- The other is the excessive charges the government is proposing to make older people pay to receive support at home.
- ✚ Support at Home is a new program meant to support older people to live at home and to prevent or delay admission to residential aged care.
- ✚ Both the new Act and Support at Home was to go live on 1 July 2025.
- ✚ There are aspects of the reforms that were welcomed, especially
 - the long overdue new Aged Care Act and
 - the announcement of an additional 83,000 home care (Support at Home) packages.
- ✚ However, the government was warned repeatedly that its proposed reforms would merely patch up the system and not actually fix it and that it needed to make significant changes. It studiously ignored such warnings.
- ✚ The new Support at Home program and other major changes were dependent on the Commonwealth implementing a new IT system that would include a centralized registration system, income assessment and payment claims system. It was inevitable that the Commonwealth would not have the system ready for a 1 July start date.
- ✚ After being warned that it did not have its own IT systems in place in time to go live on 1 July 2025, it backed down at the 11th hour and on 4 June, it announced that both the Aged Care Act and the Support at Home program would be delayed until 1 November 2025.
- ✚ It blamed providers for not being ready.
- ✚ While it did not make it explicit at the time, this delay included the planned release of 83,000 new community aged care packages.
- ✚ The delay in those packages caused considerable outrage and led to a Senate Inquiry into Aged Care Service Delivery.
- ✚ The Senate Inquiry will report on 1 October, a month before the new system rescheduled to go live. Given the timing, nothing in that report will change what happens on 1 November.

FEEDBACK

We welcome your compliment and complaints.

Please contact your nearest office with any feedback.

As part of our Continuous Improvement objective your feedback is important to our organisation.



High Tea

Thank you so much to those who were able to attend.

I was very happy with the afternoon. It was a shame that we had so many no shows which we have had to pay for. We are now evaluating the format of our thank you events going forward....your Feedback and ideas are welcomed. Please let one of our offices know of your thoughts.

- ✦ But the Inquiry managed to reveal the real waiting list for home care packages, is something that the government had been less than honest about, and it had a powerful, if short-term, win.
- ✦ It discovered that more than 200,000 frail older Australians are waiting for the services they need to live safely at home.
- ✦ Most (120,000 people) are waiting to get assessed, approved and are waiting for a package.
- ✦ Up until then, the Minister of Aged Care and Seniors, Sam Rae, had claimed that only 90,000 were waiting and that the proposed release of 83,000 new packages would effectively solve the problem.
- ✦ Before the Inquiry had even been completed, the government backed down to demands from the crossbench and the opposition for the new packages to be released.
- ✦ It announced that 20,000 packages would be released immediately and an additional 20,000 by the end of the year.
- ✦ The remaining 43,000 new packages would be released before 30 June 2026.
- ✦ However, given 200,000 people are already waiting in the queue, 83,000 extra packages will not even scratch the surface, especially with the number of Baby Boomer now joining the queue.
- ✦ In fact, the figure of 200,000 waiting is still a massive underestimate because it does not include people waiting for long-established services such as Meals on Wheels, community transport, home nursing and other services funded via a separate program called Commonwealth Home Support program.
- ✦ The Commonwealth has deliberately never collected waiting list data for CHSP, but we know from anecdotal reports that it now also has very long waiting lists in many regions. And this is before baby boomers start hitting the system in any significant numbers.

While the excessive waiting lists, the delay in the packages and the delayed IT system are immediate issues, they are not the biggest problems.

- ✦ The massive increase in consumer payments for those wishing to stay at home....over time is the principle that fees should be based on capacity to pay....there will be an increase the more services you need.
- ✦ Support at Home links fees to the number of hours of support needed per week. (ABC Four Corners has recently highlighted this).
- ✦ Excessive and unaffordable fees will inevitably force vulnerable people who want to stay at home into hospitals and care homes.

If the Government is serious about enabling people to age in place, home care must be affordable, equitable and accessible. No older person in Australia should be forced to choose between a meal and a shower. This is simply not acceptable in 21st century Australia.

I have placed the full paper and one on the ABC Investigations, at each office. Please, if interested, have a read or ask for a copy.

Our organisation is here to support our clients and to assist them through some of the changes happening. We have also said to our clients that if they haven't heard from their Home Care Package provider, that they should be seeking information. We have also pointed out that it is their right to have an advocate with them should they think the discussions could be confusing.



A new Act is great, but at times we are overwhelmed by the amount of red tape associated with it when the Royal Commission wanted an easy-to-understand Act. There are new expectations on volunteers too and we hope you will assist us in making sure we achieve what is expected. But we, and our clients will come through all of this....and we will be smiling.

Alan Russell Manager

