

VOLUNTEERS NEWSLETTER

JULY 2026

Dear Volunteer

There is much happening with our organisation at present, and there is a great deal still happening within the aged care sector since the new Act was introduced.

The Board has established a **Community Engagement Committee** with the focus on promotion of our organisation to the wider community. While we know about what happens here, most of the community thinks we only focus on meal delivery. So, we have to get our catch phrase of **'More than a Meal'** more widely known. The committee has met twice and already has wide ranging ideas and plans. Their second meeting was to familiarise themselves with Ulladulla and Sussex Inlet offices after doing so at Batemans Bay last month.

Our **menu** has been evaluated by the Dietitians at NSW Meals on Wheels. The new Aged Care Act expects us to annually have Dietitians check our menu, and if we were a production kitchen to review all of our recipes. Our menu meals come from three suppliers and the issues raised with us related to how those businesses tell us of the ingredients within their meals. We received a moderate to strong alignment with best practice aged care guidelines. I am pleased with this. The Food Panel will look at the recommendations.

The **Policy Committee** is due to meet to review the present Policy statements. All of our statements have a three year life span and some therefore need to be reviewed. There are also new expectations for us to introduce Policy documents covering Child Safety (done), and Modern Slavery. Sometimes I think we have too many Policy statements covering areas which have no impact upon the care of our clients.

On the wider scene there are changes to **how clients are assessed**. Under the new Act, experts meet and interview clients and submit their recommendations. These are 'put into an algorithm' and a level of care is returned. If this level is seen as wrong and needs reassessment, then a new application had to be made. The Government has now decided to put in a step for this, and the reassessment will not be conducted by a clinical expert but by a bureaucrat. *I have included an article on this matter which addresses the issue.*

You may also recall that clients first enter the aged care system under the **Commonwealth Home Support programme (CHSP)**. This is really the only programme which works well but it is planned that from 1 July next year it will be incorporated into the Support at Home (S@H) programme. We are supporting the CHSP Alliance in its fight to not have this happen, and a Senate Select Committee has agreed. We hope the Ministers also see the light and it won't proceed. Why destroy the only aged care programme which is working well.

You may guess that there are some concerns I have for our clients through these reforms, and I hope we get some changes before the system becomes as bad as the NDIS system.

But we shall continue to do what we do best....taking a smile and meals to clients, taking clients out and about so they can mix and mingle, and break the curse of loneliness which older people experience.



Thank you for the part you are playing in this work.

Alan Russell, Manager

FEEDBACK

We welcome your compliments and complaints. Please contact your nearest office with any feedback. As part of our Continuous Improvement objective your feedback is important to our organisation.

Support at Home does not need another pathway into the same problem. It needs the Government to fix the assessment design properly and stop making older people live with the consequences of bad policy.

After sustained pressure from just about everybody about obvious problems with the new assessment process, the Government has announced a new “Support at Home escalation pathway”. But before we get too excited, let’s read the bureaucratic fine print buried in the spin.

The latest Departmental Aged Care Update says the pathway will be for people with “complex circumstances that are not fully captured by current arrangements” when they are assigned a home support classification level or a Support at Home priority category.

That bit of word soup is as close as we are likely to get to a Government acknowledgement that some older people are being assessed or prioritised badly.

And the escalation process? Assessment organisations will be able to “refer outcomes back to the Department for further consideration and possible adjustment in specified circumstances”.

So the system may get it wrong, but do not worry. There is now a process to ask the system to think about it again.

Not a fix

This is not a fix for the assessment problem and it is not a proper safeguard. It is a bureaucratic obstacle course dressed up as a response.

Once someone notices that the outcome looks wrong, they will need to decide if the case fits the “specified circumstances” and prepare the referral. The matter will then go back to the Department for “further consideration”. Then, maybe, there will be a “possible adjustment”.

The process is almost certain to be slow, hard to administer and difficult for older people and families to understand. In a system already known for waiting lists and opaque decisions, this does not remove complexity. It adds another layer.

As a band-aid, it does not even stick properly.

Judgement removed

Worse, it shifts the final decision away from the person with the clinical skills who has actually met the older person and hands it back to the Department. There is no guarantee that the departmental staffer making that decision will have the required clinical training, experience or understanding of the older person’s circumstances.

For decades, aged care assessment has relied on professional judgement. Not perfectly and not without issues, but the principle was sound: trained assessors meet the person, consider the context and make a judgement.

No reasonable case has been put forward for why that judgement should be replaced by a rigid, algorithm-driven system, only to be considered later through a cumbersome departmental escalation process.

If professional judgement is needed to fix the outcome after the system gets it wrong, then professional judgement should have been trusted before the outcome was issued.

Control is not fairness

We all want consistency, but consistency without judgement is not fairness. It is just uniform unfairness. This is what happens when reform is driven by control rather than trust.

Support at Home does not need another pathway into the same problem. It needs the Government to trust the people doing the work, fix the assessment design properly and stop making older Australians, families and providers pay the price for bad policy..**same problem**

Roland Naufal 9 July 2026

Roland has built and at times threatened his career by being outspoken about things that matter. He has over three decades of experience, from aged care CEO and Age Friendly Cities expert to the founder of DSC, Australia’s best known NDIS educators. This led him to ask if radical honesty worked for Australia’s disability sector, then why not aged care too?