

THE ADVOCATE

Your aged care and disability advocacy news, 9 July 2024

Contact us: 1800 700 600

Message from the CEO

Aged care reform is a long road, but time is of the essence

We are three years on from the Aged Care Royal Commission, and I am concerned that for older people it is starting to feel like Groundhog Day.

While the government and sector have introduced a number of welcome reforms to improve care, including greater transparency, improved food nutrition, more care minutes, 24/7 nursing and a 15 per cent wage rise to attract and retain more staff, in terms of the aged care experience for older people, we are not there yet.

In the latest [Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Sector Performance Report](#), nearly 150 serious incidents were reported daily in 2023, and the level of aged care homes fully meeting all compliance requirements is at 85%, and in home care services 66%. Better but still not good enough. When will we get to 99.9%?

The UTS Ageing Research Collaborative recently released its [2023-24 mid-year report on Australia's aged care sector](#), showing that although increasing, minimum levels of care time targets (200 minutes per resident per day) have largely been unmet across aged care homes. We understand that there are staffing pressures and time is needed to build, but again it is older people who are missing out in the meantime.

As advocates we receive calls from people unhappy with their aged care provider or services every day. Unfortunately, across the Older Person's Advocacy Network (OPAN) we are on track to exceed last financial year's total of 36,094 calls for help with aged care issues. There is a common theme underpinning the concerns. A lot of older people tell us they feel like they have little say or control over what happens in their care and their daily lives.

The new rights-based Aged Care Act under development is the answer. It's about including older people in decision making and shifting the focus from the business of aged care to the people in aged care. However, introduction of the Act has been postponed to July 2025. It's important that we get this critical legislation right, but older people are growing frustrated with these delays.



I am not unaware that there will be work for providers to transition to a new Act, but I think it is important to remember that shifting to a rights-based model doesn't need to be hard. It's a cultural shift. It's not about providing older people with an extraordinary life, rather, just an ordinary life. One where they have the same rights as you and me, and it's assumed that they have the capacity, and have the opportunity, to make or participate in decisions about their lives.

Board news

I am pleased to welcome Barry Riddiford to the ADA Australia Board. Barry is a Townsville-based Wiradjuri Elder who brings a wealth of experience and understanding of the issues that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Barry's cultural understanding and perspectives will be a great strength in the strategic leadership and governance of our organisation.



Vale Paul Johnson. It was with overwhelming sadness that we said farewell to Paul Johnson at a celebration of his life in May. Paul was a long-time ADA Australia Board member and colleague, well-known and loved by many in the sector. He brought his strong knowledge and understanding of the aged care sector to our Board, as well as his commitment to the delivery of human rights for older people accessing aged care. Vale Paul. It was a privilege to know and work with you.

New project building confidence and skills

I am proud to announce that ADA Australia will be delivering a new ILC Project for people with disability: **Words 2 Action**. ILC stands for Information, Linkages and Capacity Building, which commenced at the same time as the NDIS, and funds projects that build knowledge, skills and confidence of people with disability and improve access to services in their communities. This project will see us extend our service reach over the border into northern NSW. More information about this important project is included in this edition.

Happy NAIDOC

This week is NAIDOC Week 2024 (7 – 14 July). Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud. ADA Australia will be attending NAIDOC events across the state and will be getting together to celebrate at local events. Download a copy of the [Supporting NAIDOC Toolkit](#).

Until next time.



Geoff Rowe.

Words 2 Action: Building confidence and skills

Our new **Words 2 Action** project will provide information, training and support to people with disability to build their confidence and skills in navigating complaints processes.

As disability advocates we see that having the skills and confidence to navigate common system issues is key to independence and inclusion for people with disability. Whether it's the NDIS, disability service providers, health services or essential services such as phone companies and banks, knowing your rights and how to speak up for them will help to solve everyday issues, and access the services and supports needed.

Words 2 Action will include a number of practical activities and assistance to navigate real-life issues of concern for the participant, such as information sessions, an in-person self-advocacy course, individual support, digital stories and resources. The learning program will be co-designed with people with disability.

The project will be delivered across four general regions:

- Townsville - Charters Towers - Ayr - Burdekin
- Rockhampton - Gladstone - Central Highlands - Biloela
- Redcliffe - Strathpine - Mt Gravatt - Capalaba - Browns Plains - Beenleigh
- Ormeau - Oxenford - Gold Coast North - Nerang - Southport - Robina - Coolangatta - Tweed Valley - Richmond Valley Coastal

Similarly, ADA Australia will also work in consortium with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland (ATSIDNQ) to deliver the **Yarn 2 Action** project across Queensland.

We will provide more updates as these projects progress.



Responding to Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is something that society generally doesn't talk about much, despite the fact that research shows around 1 in 6 older people are experiencing it. **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day** on June 15 gives us the opportunity to put this issue in the spotlight.

This year we co-hosted the *Elder Abuse Action and Prevention Forum: It's all about respect, dignity, safety*, with guest speakers Robert Fitzgerald AM, Australian Human Rights Age Discrimination Commissioner and Dr John Chesterman, the Public Advocate for Queensland.

It was an opportunity for professionals on the front line of responding to elder abuse to come together to discuss strategies for greater collaboration across elder abuse support services.

We are looking to establish a Brisbane Elder Abuse Panel – a multidisciplinary, interagency panel that comes together to share case studies, knowledge and best practice. If you would be interested in being a part of a Panel please email info@adalaw.com.au.

Thank you to our co-hosts and collaborators on the forum: Brisbane City Council, Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, Caxton Legal Centre, Elder Abuse Prevention Unit, Queensland Police, Office of the Public Guardian, Office of the Public Trustee, Relationships Australia.

COVID-19 & Flu Vaccines in Aged Care

The Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly, and Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner, Janet Anderson have distributed a [joint letter on COVID-19 information](#), urging facilities and residents to take action for the 2024 winter period.



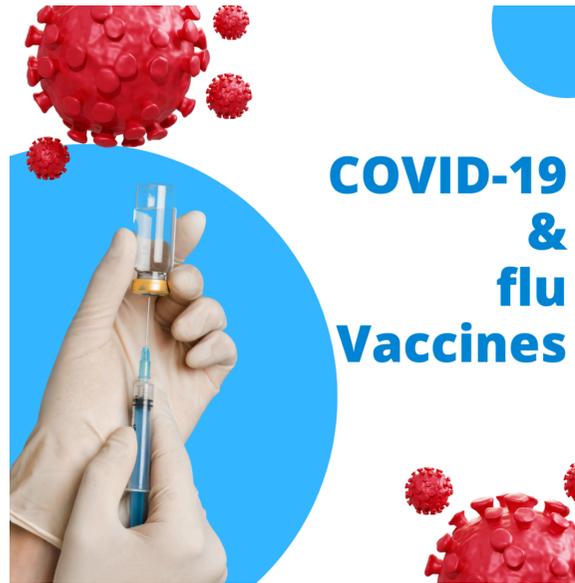
Human Rights at the Heart

As advocates, we see that the root cause of many issues is when human rights are not recognised or upheld. Recognising that everyone has the same basic human rights regardless of age, ability, gender, race, sexuality or religious beliefs is key to creating an inclusive and fair society.

In summary:

- Vaccination rates in residential aged care facilities for COVID-19 and influenza are low.
- Aged care facilities are responsible for ensuring that residents have access to the recommended vaccine dose as soon as they are eligible and are also expected to offer staff influenza vaccinations.
- COVID-19 vaccinations are free and recommended every 12 months for people aged 65 and over and every 6 months for people aged 75 and over and adults who are severely immunocompromised.
- The influenza vaccines are free under the National Immunisation Program for people aged 65 years or over. ATAGI guidelines allow both vaccines to be administered on the same day.
- Where risk of respiratory illness transmission is high, it may be necessary to apply restrictions to visitors in line with the Industry Code for Visiting in Aged Care Homes. The Commission's [Visitor access page](#) provides information and resources for providers, workers and people living in aged care homes and their families to safely manage visitor access while minimising the risk of social isolation.

If you or someone you care for is having issues accessing vaccines or visitors during periods of visitor restrictions, please speak to one of our advocates on **1800 700 600**.



These are some recent important developments in human rights legislation in Australia and globally.

Queensland Government independent review of the Human Rights Act 2019. Professor Susan Harris Rimmer has been appointed by the Queensland

Government to undertake an independent review of the operation of the Human Rights Act 2019. The Review will assess how well the Act has been implemented and how well it is meeting its objective of building a culture of human rights across the Queensland public sector.

National Human Rights Act. The report, released by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights on 30 May, has recommended that the Federal Government introduce a National Human Rights Act. This brings Australia closer than ever before to establishing the comprehensive human rights protections.

International Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. A Decision was adopted by consensus of all Member States at the 14th session UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA) recommending that the UN General Assembly consider a binding International Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. This is a significant step forward to advancing the rights of older people.



Aged Care Conversations

We are continuing to travel around the state to have local conversations with older people and providers in communities to answer questions about aged care, and understand local issues and how we can assist.

In May and June it was North Queensland's turn, with a number of events held in Cairns and Townsville including for First Nations seniors and services.

We had positive feedback that the events were very worthwhile and a number of needs were identified:

- aged care information events to be held regularly
- greater awareness of what support is available in the community for older people
- greater collaboration amongst local organisations and service providers
- increase in funding as many aged care services are at capacity
- assistance to navigate the complex aged care system.

We look forward to hosting these events again in the future. If you think this would be something that would work well in your local community, please get in touch with us on info@adaaustralia.com.au or phone 1800 700 600.



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