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Pothida Youhorn

Committee Secretary

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Via email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

SUBMISSION ON Aged Care Amendment (Implementing Care Reform) Bill 2022

About ARAS

ARAS is a state-wide, not-for-profit, independent, community-based organisation that has been providing information, education and advocacy support for older adults across South Australia since 1990.¹ Older people who use community or residential aged care services, people who live in retirement villages, and older people who are experiencing, or who are at risk of abuse from family or friends, can use an ARAS advocate, at no cost, to assist them to address their concerns. ARAS also has a specialist Aboriginal Advocates to provide culturally safe and appropriate support and hosts an annual intergenerational gathering in regional South Australia.

Additionally, ARAS is participating in the Aged Care Navigators trial in the Adelaide Northern suburbs and Barossa region of South Australia. The Aged Care Navigators support older adults to navigate the aged care system and access services.

ARAS hosted the annual South Australian World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) Conference online again in 2022. There were over 600 registrants, including from overseas and interstate as well as South Australians, with feedback received that the online event had allowed greater access for rural and remote registrants. WEAAD is supported by the United Nations and the World Health Organisation and is acknowledged annually on 15th June. The conference brings together policy makers and frontline workers, covering the latest research and reviewing the progress that is occurring while also ensuring the key message, that abuse of any older adult is unacceptable, is at the forefront.²

An experienced volunteer Board of non-executive Directors and committed staff support ARAS. In addition to supporting older adults with individual advocacy support. ARAS also provides information and education sessions about aged care rights, retirement village rights and broader human rights, contributing to community understanding and empowerment and ensuring the voice of older adults, including younger people with a disability who are residing in residential aged care is heard on issues that matter to them.

ARAS is one of the five founding members of Elder Abuse Action Australia (EAAA)³ which is funded by the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department. ARAS volunteers its expertise and knowledge to support the development of EAAA as a peak body and the ongoing refinement of the national

¹ Aged Rights Advocacy Service (SA) Inc.: History: http://www.sa.agedrights.asn.au/about_us/history

² Aged Rights Advocacy Service (SA) Inc. See Annual Report 2019/2020: <https://www.sa.agedrights.asn.au/resources/publications>

³ Elder Abuse Action Australia (EAAA): <https://eaaa.org.au/welcome-to-elder-abuse-action-australia/>



knowledge hub 'Compass'. Additionally, ARAS is a founding member of the South Australian Alliance for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (APEA).⁴

ARAS is the only South Australian member of Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) which delivers the National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP).⁵ ARAS is funded by OPAN, the Australian Government, SA Health, Office for Ageing Well and COTA.⁶

ARAS service delivery 2020 /2021 – Who we supported

Despite the challenges of Covid19 ARAS was nimble and able to pivot when faced by changing circumstances in order to continue to support older people.

Some key points from 2020/2021 about ARAS service delivery:

- **4,091 individual advocacy cases and information enquiries**
- **512 education sessions to 6,871 participants**
- **44,954 website page views**
- **6,105 contacts from the public**
- **2,147 subscribers to our news**

Additionally, we assisted 163 people to navigate the aged care system as part of the Navigators Trial in the northern Adelaide region. Demand for individual advocacy and information has increased 25 percent from last year.

Introduction

Aged Rights Advocacy Service (SA) Inc (ARAS) welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Senate, Community Affairs Legislation Committee. ARAS is generally supportive of the Bill and the principle aims of increasing access to registered nurses, capping of home care fees, increased transparency, and accountability of aged care providers. ARAS also supports the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) submission to the Committee.

ARAS makes the following specific comments.

Discussion

1. Registered Nurse 24 hours/7 days

ARAS is supportive of the need for 24 hour coverage by Registered Nurses 7 days per week. This is in recognition of the increased complex health and support needs of older people residing in residential aged care. ARAS also suggests that increased coverage may improve the delivery of care services onsite and potentially diminish the need for transfers to acute health services which can be disorientating for older people particularly older people living with dementia. ARAS is also supportive of ensuring that adequate allied health support is also provided.

⁴ Alliance for the Prevention of Elder Abuse: <https://www.apea.org.au/>

⁵ Older Persons Advocacy Network: <https://opan.com.au/>

⁶ Aged Rights Advocacy Service (SA) Inc.: Annual Report: Aged Rights Advocacy (SA) Inc. See Annual Report 2020/2021: <https://www.sa.agedrights.asn.au/resources/publications>



ARAS also acknowledges the proposed exemptions, however we suggest that any exemptions must be time limited, with those exemptions being subject to legislative review at a maximum of three years' time taking into account the challenges in building the required capacity within the system. ARAS recommends that exemptions must be monitored, reported to the Parliament annually, and made publicly available to prospective and current aged care residents as well as the general community. Virtual technology should be considered as an option to link health professionals, as long as outcomes for residents are not compromised.

ARAS is acutely aware of the current shortfall of registered nurses and the impact that has on the community, particularly in rural, regional and remote locations. ARAS has been privy to the distress experienced by residents and families when residential aged care facilities close. Closures that are attributed to not being able to safely deliver quality aged care services due to a lack of health professionals impact older people disproportionately in rural, regional and remote areas, as they are likely to be required to move significant distances away from family and friends to receive care and support. This impacts quality of life and wellbeing of older people and their family and friends.

ARAS welcomes ongoing attention and prioritisation by governments to ensuring adequate health professionals and support staff are available to support older people.

2. Capping Home Care Fees/Exit Fees

ARAS supports capping of home care fees as well as complete transparency about such fees. ARAS has supported older people to recoup fees which clearly went beyond any reasonableness diminishing the ability of the older person to access further services. ARAS notes the recent attention paid by the Advertiser and other media outlets to the current complex fee arrangements and suggests that fee arrangements must be simplified and able to be easily understood.

3. Transparency Measures

ARAS is of the view that it is in the public interest to have transparency about how government funding is spent on supporting older people. ARAS is supportive of the proposed provisions of the Bill as well as additional information that provides for transparency and accountability. ARAS supports OPAN position on additional information and measures including implementation of the Systems Governor and other mechanism such as publishing of annual reports by aged care providers with information about related party transactions, profits and other matters that are critical to building trust in the aged care system. ARAS notes that some information is already public but it is not always readily available to older people or their supporters to find easily so that they can make an informed decision to engage with the aged care service. ARAS would welcome attention to ensuring this information is easily available.

Conclusion

ARAS is supportive of the Bill however believes that some additional measures could be considered in the public interest of building trust and capacity in the aged care system.

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