

## MEDIA RELEASE

Date: 25 November 2019

### Increased home care packages and chemical restraint reduction investment welcomed - but a 'Last Not First' approach to chemical restraint needed

The overuse of chemical restraint is of particular concern to the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN). OPAN welcomes today's announcement by the Coalition Governments of increased investment in regulation, monitoring and reduction approaches to chemical restraint.

Craig Gear, OPAN CEO, stated, "Our call is for a '*Last NOT First*' approach to chemical restraint and a national campaign to remove inappropriate chemical restraint in aged care. Behavioural supports must by first line treatment and the government needs to commit to the complete elimination of inappropriate chemical restraint over time."

"We are pleased that \$10 million for additional training has been committed. It's the frontline workforce who need the skills and ability to manage challenging behaviours"

The \$25.5 million investment is a welcome response to drive better prescribing practices but OPAN believes strategies need a focus on *medication administration* in residential aged care facilities.

"The use of any medication without informed consent is a breach of a person's human rights and aged care rights." said Craig Gear. "Chemical restraint is an insidious problem and requires all parts of the aged care, medical and health systems to work together to move. We all have a role in reducing the levels of chemical restraint currently in use."

OPAN calls for the '*Last NOT First*' approach to chemical restraint, better regulation and monitoring, and for the government's response to include funding to educate older people, and importantly their families. OPAN believes this education is vital to reduce use of these high risk medications, improve understanding of informed consent and inform families of what actions to take when there are concerns.

OPAN is also supportive of the investment in an additional 10,000 Home Care Packages starting from next week. However, this level of investment, while a positive additional step, will not reduce the waiting list for home care packages to the maximum three month waiting period that OPAN and other consumer organisations have called for.

"This continues the process, but further investment both in workforce and packages will be required over the next twelve months in order to get the waiting list to a manageable level. Increased home care packages need a high quality workforce to support their delivery." says Craig Gear.

OPAN also reiterates the need for increased investment into aged care advocacy to help older people navigate the system, manage their packages, raise concerns with providers and exercise their aged care rights.

1800 700 600 [www.opan.com.au](http://www.opan.com.au)

OPAN service delivery organisation in your state or territory:



QLD

SA

WA

NT - Central

Funded by:



Australian Government  
Department of Health



**All Older Australians in receipt of Commonwealth Aged Care have the right of access to aged care advocates. Those wanting assistance in raising issues with aged care should ring OPAN on 1800 700 600.**

---

**More details** regarding Older Persons Advocacy Network, a leader in providing aged care advocacy support and elder abuse prevention, can be found at <https://opan.com.au>.

**For media information contact:**

Craig Gear, Chief Executive Officer, Older Persons Advocacy Network on (02) 8217 0211 or 0410 695 659

For immediate release