

ABN 19 659 150 786

12 June 2024

Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care
submissions@igac.gov.au

Dear Mr Ian Yates AM

Review: Administration of My Aged Care

The Aged & Community Care Providers Association (ACCPA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the review of the administration of My Aged Care.

ACCPA is the national Industry Association for aged care providers who offer retirement living, seniors housing, residential care, home care, community care and related services. We work to unite aged care providers under a shared vision to enhance the wellbeing of older Australians through a high performing, trusted and sustainable aged care sector.

We note that input is sought from people who have used My Aged Care, in the past 5 years, to seek an assessment for care, or who are planning to use My Aged Care in the future. This submission is informed by feedback from our members (who work in both metropolitan and regional areas as well as within diverse communities) and includes insights based on input from care recipients.

This submission focuses on:

1. Access and navigation challenges
2. Assessment and referral issues
3. Client experience
4. Operational inefficiencies between My Aged Care and Approved Providers

We are pleased to provide a submission to this review, identifying opportunities for system and process improvement.

1. Access and Navigation Challenges

- R1 Create a dedicated My Aged Care phone number with caller ID, along with a call back system, to build trust with the older Australian in telephone communication.**
- R2 Expand and publicise the care finder program, to increase accessibility to more older Australians.**
- R3 Implement a referral tracking system, to enable older Australians to track the stage of an assessment.**

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Members have reported that older Australians find the process of accessing services confusing and the My Aged Care website difficult to navigate. Some older people advised they were visiting face-to-face centres to overcome these barriers. However, in their experience, the availability of immediate assistance varied, with some older Australians experiencing delays. Providers have noted that this complexity often leads older people to seek help from home care providers or family to navigate the system. This issue is particularly prevalent in rural and remote areas, where engaging a care finder or advocates for assistance can be challenging. It is also a key issue for people with language, literacy and communication barriers, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and vulnerable people with sensory issues, memory loss or cognitive impairments. The issue of not being able to engage and navigate the system leads to misunderstandings, incomplete assessments, and slows the process of accessing required services.

Anecdotally, evidence indicates a proportion of older Australians will not answer calls from private or unknown numbers and therefore will not engage with the My Aged Care call centre or an assessor, if contact is attempted without a caller ID. Implementing a known number, and ensuring all calls are made with the caller ID activated, will contribute to resolution of this issue.

Members report that there also remain issues with wait times for phone assistance, leading to frustration and abandonment of calls. However, the occurrences of these situations are reportedly reducing.

ACCPA is aware that there is insufficient communication from My Aged Care regarding the status and next steps of assessments. The implementation of a referral and assessment tracking system would support older Australians and their families to feel more well informed and knowing what to expect.

2. Assessment and Referral issues

- R4 Improve My Aged Care's communication with older people through the integration of person centred care concepts (Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards 1.1) into their processes. This should involve proactively informing older people about referrals, assessments, delays, and next steps.**
- R5 Deliver targeted education to healthcare providers, community support organisations, and family members on how to use, and what to expect when using the My Aged Care system.**

Providers report that assessments for older Australians often involved lengthy delays. For example, wait times for an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) assessment could extend up to four months. If there is a need to reschedule or rebook, the referral process can be interrupted, thereby involving more lengthy delays. This is forcing older Australians to make decisions about alternative living arrangements or live for periods without the care they need. This delay can have a significant impact on their well-being and continuity of care.

The priority system for service referrals was frequently cited as inaccurate, leading to further delays. Additionally, the system's inability to manage concurrent multiple open referrals, further impedes progress (e.g. if a client both requires an ACAT assessment for residential placement and a Regional Assessment Services (RAS) home services, while awaiting).

3. Client Experience and Impact

- R6 Develop culturally appropriate outreach programs and resources, targeted towards CALD communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This could involve working with community home care providers and engaging staff with cultural communication competencies.**
- R7 Increase training for My Aged Care staff in trauma-aware and healing-informed care to improve their awareness and strategies for engaging with individuals who have experienced past trauma.**

Providers, particularly those supporting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and war survivors, report that due to past experiences, some older people have distrust in government processes and a reluctance to share personal information. A lack of understanding of the assessment process and time delays further exacerbates these trust issues. Ensuring that all My Aged Care staff are trained in person centred trauma-aware and healing-informed care, as well as increasing the in-face contact, would support a reduction in the impact of these issues.

4. Operational inefficiencies between My Aged Care and Approved Providers

- R8 Extend the functionality within the My Aged Care system to enable providers to export a greater range of data on older Australians accessing or on the waitlist for their services, facilitating improved service planning and development.**
- R9 Extend the functionality of the My Aged Care system so information on older people's progress to assessment is easily accessible.**

The functionality of extracting and managing data from the My Aged Care System is currently limited. This impacts on providers' ability to generate meaningful reports on care recipients and those on the waitlist. Reports on the waitlist and stages of assessment for older people accessing services would help providers to plan their workforce in advance of the need to accommodate service demand.

The overall complexity of the My Aged Care processes contributes to confusion for older people and those supporting them, leading to delays and mismanagement of referrals and assessments. Increasing transparency in process and increasing education on what to expect from and how to use the system will help older Australians navigate the system more efficiently. Additionally, further integrating concepts such as person-centred, trauma-aware and healing-informed care (as described in the Strengthened Quality Standards) will improve access and the overall client experience.

ACCPA is of the firm view that addressing these system and process matters would have far-reaching benefits. Not only would it improve the current programs, but it would also significantly enhance the Support at Home program by improving accessibility and confidence in My Aged Care, leading to better outcomes for older Australians and their families.

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Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this review. ACCPA and our members are highly supportive of efforts to create an accessible aged care service pathway. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this submission, please contact Anne Liddell, Head of Policy at anne.liddell@accpa.asn.au.

Yours sincerely

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