

## **We all benefit from an aged-care system centred on dignity**

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Anyone who has started 2024 looking into aged care for a loved one will understand how complex the system is to navigate.

And when you're trying to help someone you love get the care they need, this can be immensely frustrating.

In 2021 the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety's final report shone a light on the sector like never before, exposing vulnerabilities of the current system and highlighting where harm was caused to older Australians.

In response, the Government has now released the long-awaited exposure draft of the new Aged Care Act. The aim of the new legislation is to improve access and delivery of aged-care services across the country.

This new Act, like the National Disability Insurance Scheme, shifts the power, putting the older person at its centre, rather than organisations providing the service.

This welcome move ensures older people have a stronger

voice, as well as choice and control to live their lives with dignity and respect.

Some key aspects of the draft include a statement of rights intended to protect the rights of older Australians, rules on supported decision-making to

protect the wishes and preferences of the older person, a single point of entry for access to aged-care services, funding going to the older person, not the service provider (just like the NDIS model) and a new framework for complaints and restorative justice — including protection for whistleblowers, compensation and greater responsibility and consequence for rogue service providers.

The Australian Government has released an exposure draft of the Bill for public consultation, which will run through to February 16.

While there are positive elements in the exposure draft, there are some areas we would like to see further improved, including clear accountability when someone's rights are infringed — a mainstay of Advocare's work, supporting older, and often vulnerable people.

It's incredibly important for all Australians to have their say on this legislation, which will shape the aged-care sector for

years to come.

To age is a privilege and one thing we should all want to experience.

When the time comes and we need a bit of extra support, it's in all of our best interests that we have an aged-care system protecting our rights, dignity, choice, control and quality of life.

There are several ways you can have your say. Public face-to-face sessions will be held across Australia including in Perth, Bunbury, Kalgoorlie and Broome.

There are also opportunities to attend online sessions or complete a survey or written submission if that is easier. You can find more information on Advocare's website.

It is vitally important that we take the Aged Care Act draft seriously and make it as easy as possible for older people and their families to access support when they need it.

My hope is that the whole country will recognise the importance of this Act and what changes will mean to future generations.

Because every Australian, no matter their age, has a right to be listened to and understood when it comes to their own life.

**Louise Johnstone Forster is the chief executive officer at Advocare.**