

MEDIA RELEASE

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COTA Australia and partners launch Aged Care System Navigator to break down information barriers to accessing aged care

A consortium of 31 consumer-focused organisations, led by COTA Australia, will roll-out the Aged Care System Navigators Trials across the country, which have been designed to help older Australians, their families and friends better access aged care services.

Announced by the Hon Ken Wyatt, Minister for Aged Care in Perth this morning, the consortium will deliver 62 trials across every state and territory to identify which types of supports achieve the best outcomes for older Australians.

The 32 information hub trials, 21 community hub trials and 9 specialist support worker trials will deliver services predominately face to face with some telephone and online support. The Trials involve a mix of services, but broadly speaking can be described as either:

- 1 **Education or group support sessions:** group activities may be in the form of webinars, seminars or small group talks and are designed to help people be aware of how to access aged care services
- 2 **Individual one-on-one support sessions:** these may involve one-on-one assistance with My Aged Care, filling in forms, more complex needs to be delivered by specialist support workers

Chief Executive of COTA Australia, Ian Yates said “the Aged Care Navigators Trial will help older Australians, their families and friends more easily access aged care services, whether it be through listening to an education session about aged care, receiving help with filling in a form, or talking face to face with someone about your individual needs.

“COTA Australia congratulates the Government for funding the trials and for recognising the urgent need to invest in ‘system navigators’ in the aged care system, which was identified by the National Aged Care Alliance in its discussion paper ‘Integrated Consumer Supports.’

“The great thing about these trials is that they steer away from a cookie-cutter approach to accessing aged care and recognise the importance of tailoring support to access aged care services to different situations and contexts.

“A 90-year-old in the top end of Australia is going to have very different access support needs to a 70-year-old in inner city Melbourne – both the trial locations and the groups in the consortium who will be delivering the supports, have been selected to reflect the breadth and diversity of Australia’s ageing population.”

Chief Executive Officer of Older Persons Advocacy Network, Craig Gear, said the Aged Care System Navigator trials represent an “important opportunity for the consortium of organisations to work together in one of the largest national outreach programs in the history of aged care in Australia.”

“We need to be working towards a system where advocacy and information services are available to older consumers at all points along the aged care journey, from enquiries and initial contact with the aged care service system, through screening and assessment services and home care, to all stages of residential care.”

COTA Australia is the peak policy development, advocacy and representation organisation for older Australians, representing COTAs in every State and Territory and through them over 500,000 older Australians.

“By providing supports to older Australians during all stages of the aged care journey, we will be equipping them with the necessary information to allow them to make informed decisions as consumers about where and how they would like to spend the latter stages of their life.”

Chairperson for the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia, Mary Patetsos, congratulated the government for ensuring vulnerable older Australians will form a core part of the Trials, in particular CALD communities, older Australians with dementia, older Australians at risk of homelessness, ATSI communities and LGBTQI people.

“Many older Australians from the CALD community find it difficult to access aged care information and services that are sensitive to their cultural backgrounds and circumstances.

“Every older Australian, regardless of their social, cultural, linguistic and religious needs, deserves access to respectful and inclusive aged care services, free from discrimination and exclusion.”

The Aged Care Navigator Trials are funded until June 2020. The trials will be independently evaluated by Australian Healthcare Associates (AHA) to inform future policy considerations and guide the implementation of long-term models of support.

Information relating to the trial sites is available at www.AgedCareNavigators.org.au

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