



MAJOR GOVERNMENT CHANGES TO HOME CARE

Changes are no cause for concern...

Senior's Week is just around the corner, running from March 3 – 12 this year. Before the festivities kick off, however, you might be thinking about the major changes about to hit our National Home Care system. On February 27, the Australian Government is changing the way home care services are delivered to older Australians. You might be a person directly affected, or you might have a loved one who will need to learn about the updates and what they mean for them.

UPA
United in Christian Care

Ours is an ageing population, therefore these changes are being put in place to establish a sustainable and high quality aged care system that is more consumer driven, market based and less regulated.

In the current system, home care places are allocated to Approved Providers of home care through the Aged Care Approvals Round (ACAR), a resource-intensive and highly competitive process with many unsuccessful applicants each year. Come February 27, funding for a home care package will follow the consumer, allowing them to direct funding to the provider of their choice. These changes are very exciting for the consumer.

Currently, home care packages are not “portable” as the places are allocated to an approved provider and unspent funds are retained by that provider if the consumer leaves their care. From Feb 27 however, home care packages will be portable for consumers, allowing them to change providers if they wish, a new found freedom for those who receive care. If they choose to change providers, any unspent funds (less exit amount) within their package will follow them to the new home care provider.

Kim Ryall-Manley, Home Care Manager of UPA North Coast, an established home care, aged care and youth care non-profit company – said “Our vision is, and has been very clear since we were established in 1938. We hope that everyone is able to live with dignity and independence and should be able to select appropriate and affordable support and care as and when they need it. Quality of life, and supporting people to live the way they want is our goal.”

With the new home care changes, it seems this vision is becoming a reality.

“Our vision really does tie in with the new changes, and we’re happy that consumers will soon be able to choose home care services that suit their individual needs,” Said Ms Ryall-Manley.

“The choice affects not only the person using the service, but their families, and we believe the new freedom of choice will give peace of mind to the loved ones who trust us to provide the best care possible.”

What else is changing?

A consistent national system for prioritising access to home care will be established through a national prioritisation system managed by My Aged Care. Post Feb 27, this national queue will be in place. The way consumers are then prioritised will take account of their relative needs and circumstances and the time they have been waiting for care.

The process for becoming an approved provider will undergo some changes too. Approved providers of residential care and flexible care will be able to 'opt-in' to providing home care rather than going through a full application process.

Once approved provider status has been granted it will no longer lapse, whether the approval is for home care, residential care or flexible care – however, approved providers must continue to meet relevant quality and accreditation standards.

Ms Ryall-Manley of UPA commented, "When looking for a home care service provider, people should take provider experience into account given these new changes. For example, we are an award-winning provider with a proven track record in meeting the quality standards and accreditation., and so we're preparing and looking forward to helping a lot of new faces with their care packages when the changes come in."

Amidst all the changes, there are a few things that will remain the same. Existing home care consumers will continue to receive services at their current package level, there will be no changes to current fee and income testing arrangements, claims and payments will still be made through the Department of Human Services Aged Care Payment System.

Home care subsidy and supplements will continue to be paid to approved providers, not directly to consumers. Packages will continue to be delivered on a consumer directed care basis, and the total number of home care packages across the country will still be capped.

What you need to do next...

If you are currently receiving a home care package, you do not need to do anything. You will continue to receive care and services at your existing package level. More information about the changes and what they mean for you will be provided closer to 27 February.

If you have been assessed as eligible to receive a home care package, the path you follow will depend on whether you have found a provider who can offer you a suitable package and are able to enter into a Home Care Agreement by 27 February. If you find a suitable provider before 27 February, you can enter into a home care agreement with them. If you have not entered into a home care agreement before 27 February, you will be contacted by My Aged Care when a package at a suitable level becomes available. You will receive more information about the changes and what they mean for you closer to the date.

If you are not sure of your eligibility, or would like more information on the changes and how to choose your provider, the next step for you or your

loved one is to go to the My Aged Care portal. To do this, you should visit <http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/> or call 1800 200 422.

“You need to choose wisely and know your options,” said Ryall-Manley. “Our advice at UPA would be to find out about the core values held in the company. It’s such an important choice for you or your loved one, and your care and wellbeing should be the priorities.”

If you would like to contact the experienced team at UPA North Coast with any questions, you can phone them on 02 6628 5559, or visit their website at www.upa.org.au.

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ABOUT UPA

The United Protestant Association of NSW Limited (UPA) is a Christian care organisation, established with the commitment to care for disadvantaged children and the provision of care and accommodation for the elderly. The Association's work commenced at Grafton in 1938 by the late Thomas Agst, BEM, JP, when he took several small children into care. From this small beginning, the Association was to gain impetus which has since seen expanded services to both young and old with over 45 centres throughout New South Wales. From its inception, UPA has touched the lives of thousands of people by providing care of the highest quality in the context of Christian love and compassion. UPA is a non-profit Company limited by guarantee.

Today, our Association is made up of 12 Districts which have a healthy degree of autonomy, yet are bound together under the one mission and company structure. A foundational principle used since the very beginning of our work was that the money raised in the town would stay in the town. Local governance, management and administration are a core strength of UPA's work. Working co-operatively UPA has built a strong growing association of like-minded people providing a network of the highest standard of care services throughout New South Wales.

We welcome people from all religious and cultural backgrounds. We convey compassion, kindness, respect and honesty in our work. Our staff and volunteers encourage and empower those we care for to choose their own path. Mindful of how we ourselves would like to be treated, we aim to provide a caring atmosphere of Christian love and understanding. When we have failed to live up to our Mission, Values or Philosophy of Care we will seek to make amends.

UPA North Coast

UPA North Coast services areas from Port Macquarie in the South, to the Queensland Border North, and across the Gold Coast.

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