National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP) POLICY GUIDE 2013-2015
Introduction
Since the commencement of the National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP) in 1990 organisations have been successfully delivering advocacy, information and education services nationally.

The aim of NACAP is to provide free, independent and confidential advocacy and support to consumers or potential consumers of Australian Government subsidised aged care (including residential and Home Care), their representatives and their families.

The Programme objectives are to:
- assist people receiving aged care services or their representatives to resolve problems or complaints in relation to aged care services, through the provision of advocacy;
- support people receiving aged care services to be involved in decisions that affect their life;
- provide people receiving aged care services with information and advice about their rights and responsibilities; and
- promote the rights of people receiving aged care services to aged care service providers.

NACAP services are critical in assisting both consumers and service providers to understand their rights and obligations through information and education. The role of an independent Advocate is important to both consumers and service providers to assist them to resolve problems or complaints or to be involved in the decisions underpinning the provision of individualised care services. Through NACAP, Advocacy services educate consumers so that they can advocate on their own behalf, as well as advocate on behalf of consumers who are unable to advocate on their own behalf. This enhances the consumer’s capacity to choose or resolve concerns with the quality and type of aged care they receive and empowering self-determination through informed decision making.

NACAP remains an integral part of the aged care complaints management process in providing freely available and accessible services to all consumers or potential consumers of aged care services, particularly those who, as a result of their care needs, are vulnerable.

This document has been developed as a Policy Guide for NACAP services, following the expansion of the programme through Aged Care Reform. This document identifies the strategic policy direction for the delivery of the NACAP from 2013-2015.

Aged Care Reform Context
The 2013 aged care reform agenda: Five Bills formed the aged care reform package of bills that passed into law on 28 June 2013. These reforms represent the commencement of a programme to create a flexible and seamless system for more choice, control and easier access to a full range of services, where aged care recipients want it and when they need it. More information on Aged Care Reform is available on the My Aged Care Website

Coinciding with the introduction of Aged Care Reform was the provision of additional funding to NACAP services for 2011-12 to increase their capacity to respond to strong demand for services.

NACAP Expansion 2013-2015
From 2013-14, a 20% increase in funding will boost the capacity of NACAP services to meet identified unmet demand for advocacy services, particularly in rural and regional areas of Australia. It will enable older people and their families to have a greater say in the way care is provided to them and to better understand and exercise their consumer rights. The increased funding will also support additional training sessions for aged care providers and their staff so they can better understand and support the rights of aged care consumers from diverse backgrounds.
In delivering the expansion, NACAP services will focus on unmet demand including delivery of services to special needs groups.

**Target Groups**

Some older Australians with special needs find it difficult to access aged care information and services that are sensitive to their backgrounds and circumstances and are specific to their care needs. Aged care providers must ensure the specific needs and consumer preferences of special needs groups are embedded in the delivery of all services.

Special needs groups are defined in the Act as:

a) people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
b) people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
c) people who live in rural or remote areas;
d) people who are financially or socially disadvantaged;
e) veterans;
f) people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless;
g) care-leavers*;
h) parents separated from their children by forced adoption or removal;
i) lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people; and
j) people of a kind (if any) specified in the Allocation Principles.

* including Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations.

It should be noted that people may identify as a member of more than one special needs group.

In delivering NACAP services to members of these groups, consideration should be given to their specific needs.

**Rural and Remote**

Access to services in Rural and Remote areas may be limited or problematic for older people. Consumers may require additional support in advocating or supporting self-advocacy due to limited access to services. Alternate methods of communication or innovative use of technology may be considered if face to face contact is not possible. NACAP services should endeavour to develop good working relationships with health and community workers in rural/remote communities to promote services available to consumers.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People**

NACAP services should deal with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a culturally appropriate manner which is acceptable to both the client and their community.

It is desirable that NACAP services develop a good understanding of the communities in which they operate. This will ensure that advice and assistance provided to clients is appropriate for their needs. Advocates should be aware of culturally appropriate services for frail older people in their region and establish links with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and health services and providers are encouraged to explore ways of facilitating culturally appropriate advocacy guided by indigenous communities.

**Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) People**

Older people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, their families and carers need to have the information, knowledge and access to language services to engage with the aged care sector and relevant agencies, including government, as informed and supported consumers and self-advocates. Services must meet the needs of older people from CALD backgrounds, their families and carers. NACAP services are encouraged to explore ways of facilitating culturally appropriate advocacy guided by CALD communities.
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI)
Older LGBTI individuals need to feel supported to develop confidence, particularly in a consumer directed care environment as self-advocates when they engage with the aged care sector and relevant agencies, including government. Older LGBTI people need to develop a confidence to direct their care needs through a consumer-directed care service model, with appropriate advocacy services to support them where necessary.

The National Ageing and Aged Care Strategy for people from CALD backgrounds and the National LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Strategy have identified NACAP services as an area requiring ongoing review. This will ensure an emphasis of promoting, supporting and maximising access to advocacy for older people from these groups.

A copy of the CALD Strategy can be found on the Department of Social Services Website (http://www.dss.gov.au/CALDstrategy)

A copy of the LGBTI Strategy can be found on the Department of Social Services Website (http://www.dss.gov.au/LGBTIstrategy)

Care Leavers
Care Leavers include three distinct groups:
- Forgotten Australians,
- Former Child Migrants, and
- Stolen Generations.

In the 20th century, more than 500,000 children spent time in their youth or childhood in institutions and out-of-home care around Australia.

A national education package, *Caring for Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations*, has been developed to assist service providers in the aged care sector to recognise the special needs of these groups and provide appropriate and responsive care, including access to counselling and support services.

Providers would need to have regard to the particular physical, psychological, social, spiritual, environmental and other health related care needs of individual care recipients and also be aware of the diversity that can exist within a community and/or region. Establishing and maintaining links with representatives of relevant community groups and other support agencies and organisations is regarded as an integral part of providing appropriate levels of care.

People who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
In comparison to other older people, those experiencing homelessness have more complex health and support needs, face lower life expectancy and often do not have family support.

The Australian Government has expanded the support it provides for care recipients with special needs to include homeless older people. Through the Assistance for Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) programme, over $4.7 million per year is being provided in funding. These measures respond to the White Paper on Homelessness, *The Road Home* released in December 2008.

The ACHA operates outside the Act and provides support for frail, low income, older people who are renting, in insecure housing arrangements, or who are homeless. The programme helps them to remain in the community by facilitating access to housing that is linked to home care. Because their housing arrangements are insecure, some frail older people whose care needs could be met by a home care package are at risk of premature admission to residential care. Through the programme, recurrent funds are made available to organisations that provide support through paid workers and volunteers, linking people to mainstream

**People who are financially or socially disadvantaged**
Frail older people who are financially or socially vulnerable are protected from disadvantage in accessing aged care services. There are special arrangements under the Act for supported residents, assisted residents and concessional residents in residential care and hardship provisions for care recipients in residential and Home Care. Support is also provided for people in insecure housing arrangements.

**Parents separated from their children by forced adoption or removal**
On 21 March 2013, the then Prime Minister apologised on behalf of the Australian Government to people affected by forced adoption or removal policies and practices. The national apology was in response to the recommendations of the Senate Inquiry Report into Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices, which was also announced on 21 March.

The Government, through the Department of Social Services (the Department), will determine what service types will best meet the ongoing needs of people affected by past forced adoption policies and practices. The Department will work with key stakeholders and state and territory governments to identify what will work to best link people to the services they need. While it will take time to improve access to specialist services and records tracing support, the result will better achieve service integration and complement what is already available. Persons should approach their GP in relation to the Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS).

**Veterans**
Veterans, including spouses, widows and widowers of veterans, are designated as ‘people with special needs’ under the Act.

The Department of Veterans’ Affairs issues gold and white treatment cards to veterans, their war widows and widowers and dependants, to ensure that they have access to health and other care services that promote and maintain self-sufficiency, well-being and quality of life.

**Delivery of NACAP Services 2013-2015**
Advocacy services are independent and confidential services delivered for the benefit of consumers of aged care services. In advising consumers and people representing their interests, NACAP services should provide high quality consumer-focused practices that are delivered professionally.

NACAP services should be delivered in a manner which maintains current working systems and procedures, but furthermore delivers the new policy focus. Delivery must align with the Standard Funding Agreement which sets out Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and reporting requirements for the 2013-15 funding period. Under the 2013-2015 funding agreement police check requirements continue to be mandatory.

The revised funding agreement between the Commonwealth and NACAP services sets out the minimum percentage of services to be delivered to people who identify as being from a special needs group. There is recognition that, due to privacy reasons, aged care clients and aged care providers may not wish to disclose sensitive information such as being considered part of a special needs group. The Department acknowledges that this may impact on the ability of NACAP services to meet KPI targets. In cases where privacy concerns are demonstrated, NACAP services are strongly encouraged to communicate the importance of collecting this information where possible as it is essential to tailor advocacy services to suit the client’s needs.

There may be varying degrees of success or challenges in targeting special needs groups. A collaborative approach amongst NACAP services is encouraged by the Department. NACAP services should continue to communicate and work in partnership with other providers to share strategies and practices which will ultimately result in an improved quality of service delivery for people receiving aged care services, particularly in areas of emerging policy focus.
**NACAP Networking**

The Department will support collaboration through six monthly network meetings/teleconferences. These meetings/teleconferences will provide an opportunity for the Department to update NACAP services on issues across the Department and Aged Care portfolio of relevance to providers and additionally, provide an avenue for providers to raise discussion with the Department on emerging issues where an outcome could not be determined through collaboration between providers.

**Aged Care Complaints Scheme**

During 2013-2015, the important relationship between the NACAP and the Aged Care Complaints Scheme (the Scheme) will continue. The Scheme recognises that advocates provide an important role in the presentation of care recipients’ rights. NACAP services should continue to ensure a level of knowledge about the Scheme’s services to allow for appropriate referral and promotion of the Scheme when relevant.

The Scheme has developed a range of resources that can be accessed via the [Aged Care Complaints Scheme website](http://www.agedcarecomplaints.govspace.gov.au).

**NACAP Beyond 2015**

The policy direction of NACAP beyond 2015 will be influenced by a number of factors including; continued implementation of aged care reform within the policy direction of the current Government, the outcome of the Home and Community Care Service Group 2 review and implementation of the Commonwealth Home Support Programme.

Information on emerging trends being reported by providers through the activity reporting, as well as issues raised at the NACAP networking meetings/teleconferences will also be considered in the development of future policy directions of the NACAP.

The Department will endeavour to facilitate, as much as is practical, inclusion of service providers in consultative processes that may impact on the future policy directions of the NACAP. Additionally, NACAP providers should continue to engage through their established networks in following progress and seeking engagement in aged care reform public consultation processes.