

**Media release**  
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## **Parliament takes positive step on aged care assessments; independent review must deliver lasting change: COTA Australia**

The passing of new aged care legislation and the Federal Government's announcement of an independent review of the Integrated Assessment Tool are positive steps towards addressing the issues older people have been experiencing through the aged care assessment process, COTA Australia says.

The Aged Care Legislation Amendment (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Commissioner and Other Measures) Bill 2026 introduces an escalation pathway in response to concerns about the assessment tool's ability to accurately determine older people's care needs, including the lack of human clinical oversight.

The legislation also includes a sunset clause of 31 December 2027, ensuring the new arrangements cannot simply continue indefinitely without further parliamentary action. This provides an important opportunity to examine whether the pathway is working as intended and make changes where needed.

Importantly, the Government also announced an independent expert review of the Integrated Assessment Tool.

"Older Australians have been raising serious concerns about the assessment process for a long time and it's great to see those concerns have been heard with the announcement of this overall review," COTA Australia Chief Executive Officer Patricia Sparrow said.

The developments are welcome, but the focus must now be on delivering lasting improvements and ensuring older people are assessed accurately.

"This is an important step forward, made possible by organisations working together and a willingness from across Parliament to find a way forward for older Australians.

"COTA has consistently argued that more needs to be done to ensure the assessment system accurately reflects older people's care needs and it's good to see action being taken."

Ms Sparrow said the involvement of independent experts, including those with clinical expertise, and older people themselves would be critical to the review's success.

"It's good to see the Government's commitment to having the voices of older people on the expert reference group that will review the assessment tool. Having independent experts, including people with clinical expertise, examine how the tool is working is an important step.

"The review must provide a clear foundation for the changes needed to ensure older Australians are being assessed accurately and appropriately, and human oversight must be part of the assessment process."

Ms Sparrow said getting assessments right is crucial, but only part of the picture.

"An accurate assessment means little if older people can't access the care they've been approved for.

"We still have far too many older Australians waiting for home care, and questions remain about whether the funding attached to each level of support is enough to deliver the care people actually need.

Ms Sparrow also welcomed the legislation's establishment of a permanent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Commissioner.

"This is an important step towards ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older people have a stronger voice in the aged care system and receive the culturally safe, appropriate care and support they need and deserve."

"The ultimate test is whether older Australians receive the right care, at the right time. These developments are a step forward, but there is more work to do to ensure the assessment and Support at Home system deliver for older people," Ms Sparrow said.

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