



Media release
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Ombudsman findings reinforce urgent need for human oversight of aged care assessments: COTA Australia

The Federal Government must act on the Commonwealth Ombudsman's findings into the aged care assessment system and ensure experienced assessors can override automated decisions when they don't reflect an older person's care needs, COTA Australia says.

The Ombudsman today released a damning report into the Integrated Assessment Tool, finding serious problems with its reliability and fairness that have left older Australians without the support they need.

COTA Australia Chief Executive Officer Patricia Sparrow said the findings validated concerns older Australians and their advocates have been raising since the system was introduced, many of which have also been the subject of recent Senate inquiries and parliamentary scrutiny of the Integrated Assessment Tool (IAT).

"The Ombudsman's findings are deeply concerning, but unfortunately won't come as a surprise to the many older Australians who have experienced problems with the system," Ms Sparrow said.

"We've been saying from the start that experienced assessors need to be able to use their professional judgement when an automated decision doesn't reflect the needs of the person that has been assessed.

"It's disappointing that the Government has stopped short of accepting the Ombudsman's recommendations to give assessors those powers.

"The Government's recent changes are a positive step, but they create an additional escalation pathway rather than giving the assessment team those powers.

"The independent review announced by the Government must now properly consider the Ombudsman's recommendations, including legislative changes to allow assessors to override automated decisions."

Ms Sparrow said the report also reinforced COTA's longstanding concerns about the independence of the complaints process.

"Older Australians need confidence that when something goes wrong, there's a fair and independent process to put it right.

"It's crucial that complaints about aged care assessments be handled by the independent Aged Care Complaints Commissioner, rather than the department responsible for the system.

"We welcome work underway to introduce a clearer My Aged Care complaints policy by April 2027 and look forward to contributing to that process.

"At the end of the day, these decisions determine whether older Australians get the care they need to live safely and independently in their own homes. It's crucial we get them right."

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