



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Aged care consumer bodies welcome new visitor access principles to set national standard that puts older Australians first**

Aged care consumer peak bodies, led by Council on the Ageing (COTA) Australia, have welcomed National Cabinet's endorsement of [new visitation guidelines for residential aged care](#) that strike a balance between the public health risks of Covid-19 and the essential emotional and physical care provided to residents by their loved ones.

The principles incorporate recent advice developed by aged care consumer and provider peaks in response to prolonged Omicron lockdowns in aged care, adopting the 'Essential Visitor' concept from the [Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes](#).

National Cabinet's endorsement of this principle, on the recommendation of AHPPC, has been welcomed by Older Person's Advocacy Network (OPAN), Dementia Australia, National Seniors, Carers Australia and Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia.

"Two years ago, aged care consumer and provider organisations came together to develop an industry code because of our shared concern for older Australians whose health and wellbeing was severely impacted by COVID isolations," says Ian Yates AM, Chief Executive of COTA Australia.

"I thank Minister Hunt and Minister Colbeck, as well as the AHPPC, for heeding our call for a sensible national approach to aged care visitation during Covid-19 outbreaks. These principles set out a new way forward that respects the dignity of Australians receiving aged care while managing public health risks.

"It's crucial these guidelines are implemented rapidly by state and territory governments. This is a great step forward for aged care, and COTA will be watching with close interest for public health units to rapidly implement these principles in every jurisdiction across the nation.

"Despite national endorsements of the industry Visitor Access Code, COTA has still been receiving deeply concerning reports of aged care providers locking down unnecessarily and forcing people in their care into complete isolation. I certainly hope that such reports will now be few and far between.

"COTA will continue to encourage reporting of any such breaches of the Code to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and refer residents and families to the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) for help with advocacy on their behalf."

Maree McCabe, CEO of Dementia Australia says, "We are pleased the AHPPC has adopted the Essential Visitor Policy proposed by consumer and provider organisations, which will ensure all aged care residents will always have access to at least one visitor who provides essential emotional and physical care, even during an outbreak.

"For older Australians receiving aged care, especially those living with dementia, their loved ones are actually providing care when they visit. That care is vital to their physical and emotional health.

"With these new national principles to guide providers and Public Health Units, we can now achieve a consistent national standard for aged care visitation that puts the health and dignity of older Australians at the centre."

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