



2025 Progress Report

Implementation of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

Respite care

Respite care provides critical relief for carers and care recipients and is critical to reducing the need for permanent residential aged care and supporting older people to remain in the care of loved ones for longer.

The Royal Commission called for urgent reform to improve access to respite care. The Inspector-General has found very little progress towards addressing the range of issues relating to respite in the 4 years following the Royal Commission.

Where are the issues?

Minimum stays

The Inspector-General has heard many residential facilities have a minimum 4 week stay for respite. This can be problematic when carers only want short, regular breaks and when older people want less time away from home.

Respite as a pathway to residential care

The Inspector-General has heard numerous accounts of respite being used as a 'try before you buy' approach to entering residential care. This can potentially limit access for people who are genuinely in need of residential-based respite care.

Emergency respite

Emergency respite care is extremely difficult to secure. When people are in crisis and need urgent access to respite, care recipients can typically end up in hospital because there is nowhere else to go.

Inappropriate, long-term hospitalisation compromises an older person's rights and leaves them without the care they need in a highly restrictive environment.

Complex care needs

Carers continue to face a range of difficulties accessing respite care where an older person has complex care needs, such as those associated with symptoms of dementia.

Many carers of people with advanced dementia report being turned away from respite services, having been told that services are unable to meet their loved one's complex care needs. People describe being left in hopeless, helpless situations.

Home care

The availability of respite in the home remains very limited. Carers and providers alike have told the Inspector-General that there are significant workforce shortages inhibiting the availability of home-based respite services.

Premature entry into residential care

For these reasons (amongst many others), limited access to respite care contributes to accelerating rates of carer burnout and premature entry of an older person into residential care.

What needs to be done?

- For residential care, government should consider extra funding for respite-specific services, requiring providers to make more respite beds available, and work with providers to address minimum care 'blocks' of time.
- For in-home respite, the government should work with providers to collectively develop strategies to develop and retain suitably qualified workers.

A lack of access to appropriate respite will see people enter residential aged care prematurely, potentially against their wishes, and at a higher cost to the taxpayer.