



**Australian Government**

# **Younger People in Residential Aged Care**

**Strategy 2020–25**



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Throughout this document, general data on younger people in residential aged care was extracted in September 2020 from the Department of Health, Ageing and Aged Care Data Warehouse, and is live data subject to change; NDIA data is at 30 June 2020 unless otherwise stated.

The Australian Government's targets,  
apart from in exceptional circumstances,  
seek to ensure there are:

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no people under the age of 65 entering  
residential aged care by 2022

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no people under the age of 45 living  
in residential aged care by 2022

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no people under the age of 65 living  
in residential aged care by 2025

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# 1. Overview

## 1.1 Summary

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring no younger person (under the age of 65) lives in residential aged care unless there are exceptional circumstances. The aged care system is designed to support the needs of older people and is not designed for younger people.

On 25 November 2019, in response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety's interim report, *Neglect*, the Australian Government announced strengthened Younger People in Residential Aged Care (YPIRAC) targets and an intention to develop a strategy to meet those targets.

The Australian Government's YPIRAC targets, apart from in exceptional circumstances, seek to ensure there are:

- no people under the age of 65 entering residential aged care by 2022;
- no people under the age of 45 living in residential aged care by 2022; and
- no people under the age of 65 living in residential aged care by 2025.

The experiences and needs of younger people living in residential aged care, their families and carers, are central to the YPIRAC Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy recognises and prioritises the rights of people to determine where and how they choose to live. The Strategy also recognises that a younger person's preference to remain in residential aged care may change over time as they see clear pathways to age-appropriate accommodation.

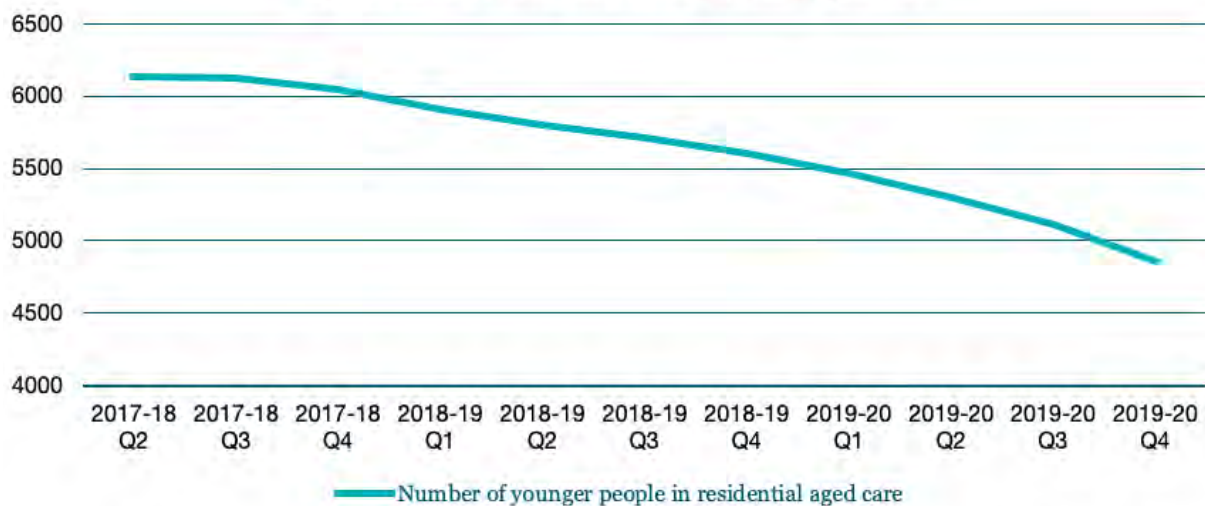
The Strategy will guide concrete actions to reduce the number of younger people entering residential aged care and support those already living in residential aged care to move into age-appropriate accommodation with the supports they need. The Strategy builds on the 2019 YPIRAC Action Plan and will extend and improve upon previous initiatives.

## 1.2 Why we need a strategy

Supporting younger people out of residential aged care and into age-appropriate accommodation has been a focus of the Australian and state and territory governments for decades, but until recently progress has been modest.

Through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), along with concerted action across the Australian Government, we are seeing a downward trend in the number of younger people in residential aged care. The number of younger people living in residential aged care has dropped from over 6,000 in 2017–18 to 4,860 as at 30 June 2020.

**Figure 1: Number of younger people in residential aged care, by the end of reporting quarter**



Actions that have contributed to this include:

- introducing revised Aged Care Assessment Supplementary Guidelines which strengthen guidance for Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACAT), ensuring there are no other age-appropriate facilities or services to meet the younger person’s needs prior to approving aged care;
- creating a dedicated team of National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) YPIRAC Planners who support younger NDIS participants in residential aged care;
- implementing learnings from the 2019 South Australian hospital discharge pilot, including rolling out NDIA Health Liaison Officers across Australia;
- working closely with hospital systems and ACAT assessors to provide alternative housing options for those NDIS participants at risk of entering residential aged care;
- NDIS funding short and medium term accommodation supports for participants while waiting for their confirmed longer-term Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) or other accommodation to become available; and

- reforming SDA to:
  - provide greater options to live with family, friends and partners;
  - include funds up-front in a NDIS participant plan; and
  - encourage the construction and supply of more diverse SDA dwellings.

However, more needs to be done. We have the opportunity, working closely with younger people and their representatives, state and territory governments and other sector stakeholders, to build on this progress to reach the YPIRAC targets. This requires a clear strategy for coordinated action across governments and with the sector.

## 1.3 Who it covers

The Strategy covers all younger people (NDIS participants and non NDIS participants) under the age of 65 living in, or at risk of entering, residential aged care, including providing choice to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people between 50 and 64 years of age who are eligible for the aged care system.

Where an initiative applies to a younger person in residential aged care who is an NDIS participant, the term ‘YPIRAC participant’ is used in this Strategy.

Where a YPIRAC participant currently living in residential aged care turns 65 years old, the NDIA will continue to support that person to achieve their goals.

## 1.4 Who needs to be involved

Achieving the YPIRAC targets requires collaborative engagement and positive contributions from all YPIRAC stakeholders, including younger people, their families, carers and supporters; the Australian and state and territory governments; housing, health, aged care and disability systems; other mainstream community supports; sector peak organisations; and providers and investors in supports, housing and SDA.

Access to health services, including rehabilitation and palliative care, and to suitable public and community housing solutions, as well as an expanded SDA market, will be critical to ensure options exist for younger people living in, or at risk of entering, residential aged care. This will require collaboration with state and territory governments and providers of services, including for younger people who are not eligible for the NDIS.

Advisory and working groups will be established to support the implementation of the Strategy. A Stakeholder Reference Group was established to support the development of the Strategy as well as exchange information, share experiences and bring expertise and knowledge about the needs of younger people in residential aged care.

## 1.5 How we will monitor progress

The YPIRAC Joint Agency Taskforce (JATF) has been established with responsibility for driving implementation of the Strategy to achieve the YPIRAC targets. The JATF has executive representation from the Department of Social Services, Department of Health and the NDIA. JATF representatives report to the Minister for the NDIS and to the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians.

Reporting on the Strategy is important to ensure that progress is being made towards achieving the YPIRAC targets. Regular communication with stakeholders on delivery of actions is essential so that younger people and their families know what changes have been made, are being made or are planned, to give greater choice and control over their lives. Equally important is for the sector, industry and stakeholders to know what is being done to support younger people and how they might contribute in achieving the YPIRAC targets.

Key to this is the introduction of a high-level report each year that tracks progress towards the YPIRAC targets.

## 2. Priority areas

The Strategy covers four priority areas to give younger people greater choice and control over where they live and what supports they need to either transition out of, or not enter residential aged care. They are:

**Priority 1:** Understanding younger people and systems

**Priority 2:** Improving the system

**Priority 3:** Creating options

**Priority 4:** Supporting change

These four priority areas have been identified as critical to achieving the YPIRAC targets by:

- preventing younger people from entering residential aged care;
- supporting younger people to leave residential aged care; and
- supporting younger people while they are in residential aged care.

While the outcome of the Strategy is for no younger person to be in residential aged care, there may be some limited exceptional circumstances where a younger person may enter, or continue to live in, residential aged care.

### 2.1 Circumstances for younger people to enter or remain in residential aged care

The following principles will guide decisions about the circumstances in which a younger person may enter or remain in residential aged care:

- younger people should be supported to exercise choice and control about where they live;
- strict eligibility conditions will need to be met for a younger person to enter residential aged care;
- each younger person's unique circumstances and goals should always be considered;
- education and support for younger people, and education within health and social supports, is critical to their informed choice;
- a younger person's accommodation and support preferences may change over time; and
- appropriate decision-making mechanisms must be in place to ensure relevant information and advice is considered and there is accountability in decisions.

## 2.1.1 Circumstances where younger people may enter residential aged care

The following conditions must be satisfied for any entry of a younger person into residential aged care:

- all options for accommodation and supports for the younger person have been actively explored and there are no other facilities or services more appropriate to meet the person's needs; and
- the younger person, with their family, carers and/or supporters, is supported to exercise informed choice and control to the full extent possible in the circumstances.

### Circumstances for entry:

- A. the accommodation, for reasons such as remoteness, cultural, community or family considerations, or a specialist support model, is considered to be the most appropriate option for the younger person; or
- B. the younger person is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person who is aged between 50 and 64; or
- C. there are urgent circumstances in which the younger person is unable to access supports and/or age-appropriate accommodation and where the lack of access to immediate support represents a significant risk of harm for that person.

## 2.1.2 Circumstances where younger people may remain in residential aged care

Where a younger person who is currently in residential aged care has exercised informed choice and decided to remain in residential aged care, despite there being an opportunity available for suitable age-appropriate accommodation.

## 2.1.3 Informed choice for younger people

Informed choice for a younger person in, or at risk of entering, residential aged care means:

- deliberative discussions with the younger person, their family, carers and/or supporters where they are provided the opportunity to explore more age-appropriate alternatives to residential aged care;
- up-to-date information on accommodation options and supports is provided;
- accommodation and support goals and options continue to be explored; and
- the choice is not considered final and is periodically reviewed and supported by ongoing discussions with the younger person, their family, carers and/or supporters.

### 3. What we know

As at 30 June 2020, we know that there were:

- 130 younger people in residential aged care under 45 years of age. Of those, 127 had an approved NDIS plan;
- 4,860 younger people in residential aged care under 65 years of age. Of those, 3,690 had an approved NDIS plan;
- over 95 per cent of younger people in residential aged care with an approved NDIS plan live in non-remote areas;
- 34 per cent of younger people residing in residential aged care in NSW, 29 per cent in Victoria, and 19 per cent in Queensland, with the remaining 18 per cent in Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory; and
- 149 younger people in residential aged care found ineligible for the NDIS.

Younger people who enter residential aged care who are not yet NDIS participants will receive support to test their eligibility to access the NDIS. Many current YPIRAC are undertaking this process.

There are a number of key reasons younger people enter and remain living in residential aged care including:

- challenges associated with sourcing appropriate health, mental health, housing and disability supports for people with diverse and complex needs in the desired location;
- lack of, or delay in sourcing, age-appropriate accommodation and support to live in community settings;
- maintaining a family unit when the ageing parent of a younger person enters residential aged care and both wish to remain together;
- palliative or end-of-life support that is unable to be accessed quickly through the health system, and in more age-appropriate settings, including disability settings; and
- lack of support to manage issues associated with premature ageing.

## 3.1 Preventing younger people from entering residential aged care

A critical step to preventing younger people from entering residential aged care is by providing faster access to, and greater availability of, age-appropriate accommodation and supports.

A comprehensive assessment with an ACAT assessor to determine eligibility for residential aged care should only be undertaken for a younger person once eligibility for the NDIS has been tested and when all other support options have been exhausted.

Other key elements to prevent entry to residential aged care include:

- fostering a culture and building capability across all relevant service systems that reinforces the understanding that residential aged care is not an appropriate option for younger people;
- ensuring there is early and active engagement with support services and hospitals, including earlier planning, to explore options for age-appropriate accommodation and supports prior to discharge;
- well informed and collaborative hospital and rehabilitation discharge planning processes;
- diversion strategies and a robust policy framework that prioritises age-appropriate accommodation and support options; and
- streamlined and efficient NDIS processes to support eligible younger people.

### Completed actions

The following actions have been undertaken to prevent younger people from entering residential aged care:

- introducing revised Aged Care Assessment Supplementary Guidelines for Aged Care Assessment Teams that ensure younger people test eligibility for the NDIS first to explore age-appropriate supports and accommodation options before proceeding to an ACAT assessment;
- establishing a specific NDIA YPIRAC Planning team, with the complex support needs expertise to assist younger people, their families and carers in exploring reasonable and necessary support options to meet their goals;
- funding short and medium term housing supports for YPIRAC participants while waiting for their confirmed longer-term accommodation to be available;
- implementing NDIS Health Liaison Officers across Australia to enhance connections between hospitals and the NDIA; and
- initial discussions with state and territory governments to understand the range of jurisdictional health, community and housing solutions available to assist younger people at risk of entering residential aged care.

## 3.2 Supporting younger people to leave residential aged care

Alternative, age-appropriate accommodation and supports are crucial to assist younger people to leave residential aged care. Pathways to leave residential aged care, including accommodation and support options, must be sustainable to avoid putting younger people at risk of re-entering residential aged care or hospital. Sustainability of options should consider scalability, adaptability and affordability.

Market development is necessary to provide age-appropriate and disability accessible accommodation in a community setting.

Other key elements to support sustainable pathways out of residential aged care include:

- identifying age-appropriate accommodation and supports for younger people not eligible for the NDIS;
- supporting younger people to discuss their views on seeking age-appropriate accommodation;
- assisting younger people to include goals in their NDIS plan to access age appropriate accommodation, and where required, capacity building supports to prepare for their move;
- ensuring YPIRAC participants seeking to leave residential aged care have access to reasonable and necessary supports; and
- encouraging exploration of innovative and responsive medium-term accommodation options for younger people to leave residential aged care with supports while waiting for their confirmed permanent accommodation to become available.

### Completed actions

The following actions have been undertaken to support younger people to transition from residential aged care:

- ensuring home modifications or SDA are appropriately included in YPIRAC participant plans where that aligns with a participant's goals and aspirations;
- improving NDIS support coordinator capability to support YPIRAC participants to explore age-appropriate accommodation options in their community;
- resolving some boundary issues between the NDIS and other health-related services by funding some disability-related health supports for NDIS participants who need help to manage a range of disability-related health needs;
- establishing a specialist housing operations section in the NDIA to holistically consider a younger person's housing and other support needs;
- enabling family, friends and partners to live with NDIS participants in SDA; and
- commissioning a detailed analysis and report of the characteristics and circumstances of younger people living in residential aged care in order to inform the development of future initiatives to support younger people to move to age-appropriate accommodation.

### 3.3 Supporting younger people while they are in residential aged care

The longer a younger person lives in residential aged care, the more difficult it can be for them to leave and establish themselves in the community. To address this, it is important that younger people are provided with appropriate supports, while they are in residential aged care, to enable them to actively participate in the community and to leave residential aged care, if it is their choice to do so.

Other key elements to providing support to younger people while they are living in residential aged care include:

- early and active engagement around pathways to leave residential aged care;
- supporting younger people to test their eligibility for the NDIS;
- improving access to advocacy to ensure younger people, their family, carers and/or supporters are able to make informed choices about age-appropriate accommodation and support services;
- expanding information resources for support coordinators, families and carers about the range of alternative accommodation and support models; and
- engaging with residential aged care providers, the NDIA, state and territory governments and other support providers on the level and types of age-appropriate support available to younger people living in residential aged care, including those not eligible for the NDIS; and
- implementing NDIS quality and safeguards regulation of residential aged care providers supporting NDIS participants.

#### Completed actions

The following actions have been undertaken to support younger people who are currently in residential aged care. These are aimed at supporting younger people to understand their options and to ensure they have quality care while they are in residential aged care.

- focusing NDIS planning conversations to make sure younger people have adequate capacity-building supports included in their plan to assist them to transition out of residential aged care, where they have identified that as a goal;
- reviewing all YPIRAC participant plans to ensure accommodation preferences have been clearly explored and articulated; and
- providing reasonable and necessary supports for all YPIRAC participants to explore their goals.

## 4. What we need to do

### 4.1 Areas for future action

The Australian Government will work closely with stakeholders to implement the Strategy and develop and monitor actions that support younger people in, or at risk of entering, residential aged care.

Priority areas of work to effectively implement the Strategy have been co-designed by the Australian Government and key YPIRAC stakeholders, with input from state and territory governments.

#### Priority 1: Understanding younger people and systems

**Outcome: Meeting the needs of younger people and giving greater choice and control**

Actions under development include:

- undertaking further data collection and analysis to better understand younger people currently living in residential aged care, as well younger people at risk of entering residential aged care, identify barriers and enablers and inform further initiatives to prevent entry to, and support leaving, residential aged care;
- undertaking an analysis of YPIRAC who have moved from residential aged care to understand the pathways, living arrangements, and outcomes;
- collating and sharing information from the Australian and state and territory governments, sector representatives and other stakeholders to provide a holistic picture of younger people living in residential aged care;
- undertaking mapping of interfaces between the disability, aged care, health and housing systems, including government and non-government sectors; and
- analysing potential service/system gaps and barriers for YPIRAC.

#### Priority 2: Improving the system

**Outcome: Improving pathways and linkages across the disability, aged care, housing and health systems**

Actions under development include:

- investigating options for mechanisms to collaborate effectively across systems and implementing practical way(s) to make this happen;
- identifying opportunities to improve the operation of service systems relevant to younger people to expand options and choices about housing and support in the community;

- working with state and territory governments to develop accommodation options and support pathways, particularly for younger people not eligible for the NDIS;
- improving processes to identify younger people at risk of entering residential aged care;
- strengthening residential aged care admission roles;
- improving the service delivery interfaces between aged care, disability and housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander younger people;
- strengthening system linkages with palliative care and end of life supports;
- improving guidance and training for NDIA YPIRAC Planners and NDIA Support Coordinators to help younger people to better understand their options;
- connecting NDIS participants with dedicated housing support coordinators who can assist the younger person to transition to their identified housing option; and
- establishing a national network of system coordinators to actively engage and provide individualised support to younger people living in, or at risk of entry to, residential aged care, including navigating Commonwealth, state and territory disability, health, housing and social support systems.

### Priority 3: Creating options

#### **Outcome: Providing age-appropriate accommodation and ongoing support options**

Actions under development include:

- improving data capture and undertaking a review of YPIRAC participants' housing goals, actions and plans to reflect changes in goals;
- developing the market for accommodation and supports to improve options and provide greater choices for younger people;
- improving accommodation pathways such as medium-term accommodation and implementing diversion strategies;
- consulting with the housing sector, including state and territory governments, to identify all existing and available SDA;
- a database of existing and new housing options currently available and in the future for NDIS participants; and
- working closely with state and territory governments and key industry leaders to identify alternative housing options and develop actions to support younger people not eligible for the NDIS.

## Priority 4: Supporting change

### **Outcome: Informing younger people of choices and supporting them to achieve their goals**

Actions under development include:

- developing a communications plan detailing messaging, stakeholders, artefacts and timeframes;
- providing regular communication to report progress against the YPIRAC targets; and
- developing appropriate tools and resources for younger people, their families and carers, disability, aged care, housing and health sectors and providers.

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