



# **New Aged Care Act Rules consultation – Release 2a – Funding for Support at Home program**

December 2024

**Our purpose**

To enable the pursuit of a good life for everyone

## Executive Summary

Hireup welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the New Aged Care Act Rules – Release 2a - Funding for the Support at Home program. As a digital platform provider supporting Australians to manage their care needs, Hireup offers a wide range of services, including personal care. Our work provides us with firsthand insights into the critical importance of personal care in maintaining health, dignity, and quality of life.

We are particularly concerned about the classification of personal care services as 'independence' services rather than 'clinical care' in the Support at Home contribution rates outlined in *Chapter 10, Part 2, Division 1, Subdivision A - Determination of individual contribution rate*.

Under the current framework, personal care is treated as a non-clinical service, requiring participant contributions of up to 50% per hour of personal care provided. This distinction creates financial barriers for older Australians, especially those with complex health needs such as incontinence, wounds, or mobility challenges. Without adequate access to personal care, participants face significant risks, including declining health, hospital admissions, and reduced independence.

At Hireup, we see daily the profound impact personal care has on our participants' lives, particularly those who rely on support for essential hygiene, wound management, and mobility assistance. Treating personal care differently from clinical care undermines its health-critical nature and leaves vulnerable participants without the services they need to maintain their health and wellbeing.

We strongly recommend that the government reclassify **personal care as clinical care**, ensuring it is **fully funded by the government** without requiring participant contributions. This change would:

- Remove financial barriers for vulnerable individuals, ensuring equitable access to critical services.
- Reduce avoidable health complications and hospitalisations by addressing critical needs such as hygiene and mobility supports.
- Recognise the true value of personal care in supporting health, independence, and quality of life for older Australians.

By embedding these changes into the rules, the government can ensure that the proposed framework aligns with the Statement of Principles and the rights-based approach in the recently passed Act, making it both equitable and practical in addressing the real-world needs of older Australians. This will safeguard their health and wellbeing, uphold their rights to dignity and independence, reduce inequities in service delivery, and strengthen the broader goals of the Support at Home program.

## Recognising personal care as essential to health outcomes for older Australians receiving in-home care

The aged care sector is undergoing a significant shift toward home-based care. In 2023, **315,000 people opted for long-term home care, exceeding the 250,300 individuals in residential care**<sup>1</sup>. This trend reflects a strong desire for independence, comfort, and familiarity. Personal care is central to enabling this preference, as it provides essential support for daily living, ensuring that older Australians can remain safely and comfortably in their homes.

Bathing, personal hygiene, and grooming are fundamental and should never be considered optional. As people age, they often lose independence and require help with tasks like dressing, bathing, and cooking. For many, asking for this kind of help can already feel embarrassing or stigmatising.

Routine hygiene is vital to prevent serious health issues such as aspiration pneumonia and infections due to poor oral hygiene or inadequate bathing<sup>2</sup>. A 2019 study published in BMC Geriatrics<sup>3</sup> highlights the crucial role of personal care in supporting older Australians with chronic conditions to manage essential daily activities, such as mobility and personal hygiene.

Home care services, while critical, come at a cost that many older Australians may struggle to afford, creating barriers to accessing the support they need. These financial challenges can leave vulnerable individuals without adequate care, increasing the risk of health complications and placing greater pressure on our hospital systems or undermining their ability to remain independent at home.

Requiring participant contributions for personal care services creates additional challenges, particularly for vulnerable groups like those with chronic conditions or limited incomes. Many may choose to forgo care altogether, leading to worsening health and higher long-term healthcare costs.

### Recommendations

Personal care is a vital element of aged care, directly impacting the health, dignity, and independence of older Australians. Despite its significance, personal care is currently classified as a non-clinical service. Under the draft rules participants will be required to contribute up to 50% of the cost of each hour of personal care support. As a result, many participants may choose to reduce or entirely forgo essential personal care services. To address this, we urge the government to take the following steps:

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<sup>1</sup> [What are the challenges facing aged care in 2025 – beyond legislation?](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Assisting Patients With Personal Hygiene](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Understanding the care and support needs of older people: a scoping review and categorisation using the WHO international classification of functioning, disability and health framework \(ICF\)](#)

- Recategorise personal care from the independence category to clinical care in the Support at Home program. Remove participant contributions for personal care services under Chapter 10, Part 2, Division 1, Subdivision A - Determination of individual contribution rate, ensuring these critical services are fully funded by the government as part of the clinical care category.
- Recognise personal care as a core component of clinical care, acknowledging its essential role in maintaining health, preventing medical complications, and supporting overall wellbeing.

## Conclusion

Hireup strongly urges the government to prioritise and implement these considerations in the finalisation of the Aged Care Act rules.

By reclassifying personal care as clinical care and fully funding it through government support, we can remove these financial barriers. This change would improve health outcomes, reduce hospital visits, and allow older Australians to live independently and with dignity in their own homes. Ensuring that personal care is accessible to everyone is a crucial step toward a fairer and more effective aged care system and also align with the outcomes of [National preventive health strategy 2021-2030](#).

Hireup remains committed to supporting these critical reforms and working collaboratively to ensure the aged care system meets the needs of all Australians with dignity and fairness.