

Achieving the Younger People in Residential Aged Care Targets

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Background

In 2019, the coalition government committed to measurable, timebound targets to solve the issue of Younger People in Residential Aged Care (YPIRAC) once and for all.¹ The aims of this analysis are to:

- Review progress of the current YPIRAC initiative
- Analyse the pathways of younger people into and out of aged care

YPIRAC targets

- No people under the age of 65 entering residential aged care by 2022
- No people under the age of 65 living in residential aged care by 2025¹

Interventions 2020-23

Aged care assessment process: Health and aged care have made it much harder for younger people to enter RAC.¹

Systems Coordinator Program: Health and aged care provided Ability First with \$29.5 million to implement a Systems Coordinator Program for non-NDIS participants.² This program has not achieved its objectives to support younger people to either move out of or avoid entering RAC.³

YPIRAC planners: NDIA specialist YPIRAC planners.¹

Accommodation matching: The NDIA has set up an accommodation matching team.⁴ There appears to be a significant conflict of interest with a government funding agency supporting vulnerable people to make a choice about alternative housing and support.

YPIRAC trends

Initial analysis shows positive trends in the reduction of admissions and the number of younger people in RAC (Figures 1 & 2). To better understand the impact of the current YPIRAC initiative we examined the pathways into and out of aged care.

Figure 1. Young people entering RAC

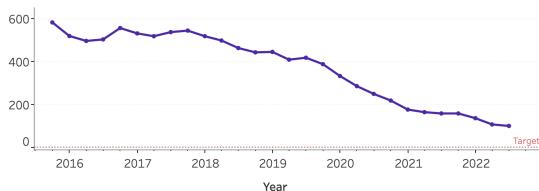
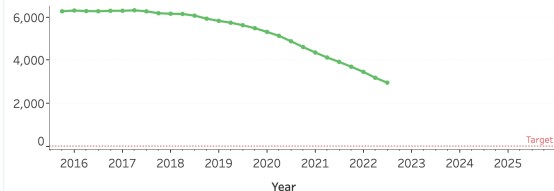
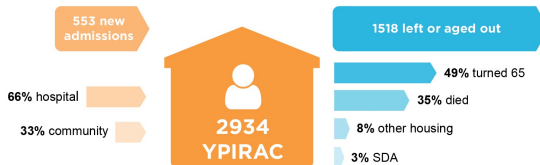


Figure 2. Young people in RAC



Source: AIHW analysis of the Department of Health and Aged Care's Ageing and Aged Care Data Warehouse <https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/Resources/Younger-people-in-residential-aged-care>

Figure 3. Pathways into and out of RAC



Source: based on AIHW analysis of the Department of Health and Aged Care's Ageing and Aged Care Data Warehouse https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/www.aihwgen/media/2020-21-YPIRAC/2021-22_YPIRAC/YPIRAC-tables-June-2022.xlsx

Findings

Unfortunately, people are not leaving the YPIRAC cohort for the right reasons. Most YPIRAC either die or stay in RAC until they turn 65 (Figure 3). Last financial year only 39 young people left RAC to go into Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA). Historically RAC was a quick and easy discharge option for hospitals. There is no evidence that there are less people under 65 acquiring disabilities or deteriorating with degenerative neurological conditions.⁵ Some of the current alternate pathways for over 1,500 younger people at risk of RAC per annum are worse than being admitted to aged care (Table 1).

Table 1. Where are the young people at risk of RAC going?

Long hospital stays	One unintended consequence of making it harder for younger people to enter RAC is that NDIS participants are getting stuck in hospitals for months or years. ⁵
Transitional beds	Some of this cohort are going to transition units set up by health. Several states have opened old hospital wards or repurposed older RAC facilities to create lower cost beds. ^{6,7}
Supported Independent Living (SIL) Homes	Some disability providers are renting private homes and setting up groups homes for this cohort. Timely hospital discharge to the best available housing option is critical. However, these NDIS participants are at risk of getting stuck with these providers and may never get to choose their long term housing or support. ^{8,9}

Conclusion

The NDIS was designed as an insurance scheme with universal coverage that pools risk across all Australians and takes the risk of disability support costs away from individuals.¹⁰ Overall, the NDIS and the YPIRAC initiatives implemented by the coalition government have not improved the lives of YPIRAC or those at risk of RAC. The NDIS is failing younger people who acquire a disability and end up in or at risk of aged care. However, YPIRAC is still a solvable problem. A new approach is needed. The current Federal Government has an opportunity to work collaboratively with experts in the sector to solve the issue of YPIRAC once and for all.