

The role of osteopathy in the Support at Home program for older Australians

The aim of this position statement is to ensure the community is met with the right access to osteopaths for the improvement of the quality of care provided to the ageing population.

The role of osteopaths in aged care

Osteopaths are integral to the multidisciplinary allied health team and play a pivotal role in preventative care for older Australians. Osteopaths are trained in a range of manual therapy, exercise prescription and other evidence-based techniques that can assist older Australians to manage various conditions associated with ageing.

Osteopaths provide care to older Australians for musculoskeletal conditions, falls prevention, rehabilitation for falls and other conditions, general mobility and to help older Australians stay in the community for longer:

- Fall prevention - reviewing residents post fall to assess injuries and concerns and adjust plans (e.g. gait, stability, postural, functional capacity and other activity-based assessments).
- Comprehensive musculoskeletal and health care assessments incorporating biopsychical focus (e.g. assessing client needs against physiological capabilities and injuries).
- Developing therapy plans and providing interventions to meet needs, goals and preferences of residents, to support their wellness and quality of life (e.g. exercise-based therapies, hands-on pain management therapies for mobility or to stay in the community for longer).

What is Osteopathy Australia advocating for?

Osteopathy Australia is advocating for:

1. The inclusion of osteopathy in the 'allied health and therapy' service type for Support at Home to align with other federally funded care schemes.
2. Access to the right skill and mix of workforce by leveraging existing sector reforms.
3. The provision of clear and accurate communication to the sector about key changes to avoid breaches under the new legislation.
4. Mirroring or aligning multiple regulations across the care sectors to avoid duplication, cost or administrative/regulatory burdens.
5. Any additional regulation must be affordable and geared towards improving quality and safety.
6. Ahpra registration and the quality, safety mechanisms and complaint investigations it provides should be recognised to avoid duplication of checks and processes.
7. Sustainable and affordable registration, with a preference for registration to have zero cost for health professionals.

What do we want to achieve?

We want to improve and solidify access to osteopathy for older Australians within the aged care sector. In particular, we are lobbying for the re-categorisation of osteopathy to the appropriate 'allied health and therapy' service type for the Support at Home program. Osteopathy Australia is calling on government stakeholders to make these changes so older Australians do not need to withgo osteopathy care due to consumer co-contribution payments.

Why this benefits Australians

- Helping support older Australians to stay in their home for longer, which also reduces overall costs to the aged care scheme.
- Osteopathy care can help improve mobility and balance, helping to reduce the risks of falls in the community and therefore unnecessary hospitalisations.
- Reduces the impact of current workforce shortages across Australia.
- Improves access, affordability and equity for Australians to aged care services.

Policy issues and barriers

- The Support at Home service list classifies osteopathy under the 'therapeutic services for independent living' category rather than the appropriate 'allied health and therapy' service type due to poor understanding of the osteopathy scope of practice by governmental departments.
- Osteopaths are often left behind as a part of a multidisciplinary team where there is a growing need for their skills and expertise.
- Departmental access issues make this difficult and older Australians are missing out on crucial care due to regulatory requirements, which osteopaths cannot meet.

Implications

Without access to osteopathy, older Australians may be at greater risk of hospitalisation and falls in the community. Where many accidents can be prevented with osteopathic care, older Australians are going without this care due to the cost of consumer contribution for Support at Home.

Educational Integration:

It is important that the university curriculum continues to teach osteopathy students about aged care. Aged care is a growing area and will continue to require expansion of the workforce based on the population requirements. External practical requirements should also be adhered to exhibiting the opportunities across aged care.

Review

This position statement will be reviewed as often as required to align with legislative, regulatory, policy and/or practice change. Last review: January 2026.

Need more information or help?

For further information, a suggestion or to discuss this topic, please:

- Email your enquiry to info@osteopathy.org.au
- Call Osteopathy Australia on 1800 467 836
- Access further information via www.osteopathy.org.au
- Refer to our [aged care cheat sheet](#) detailing everything you need to know right now.