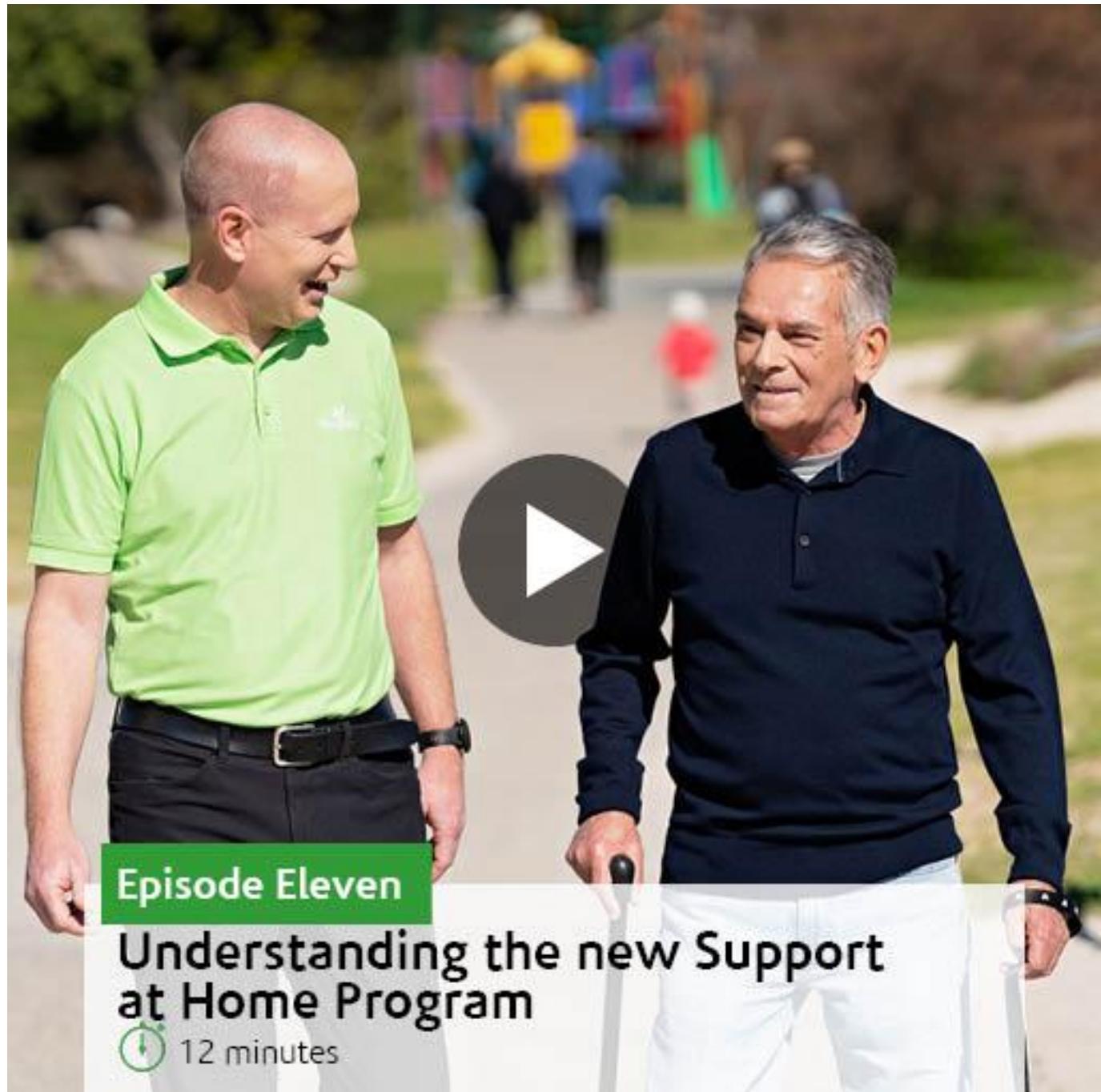


Age Old Problems: New Aged Care



A podcast by *Helping Hand*



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Episode 11: Understanding the new Support at Home Program


Helping Hand

00:00:00 Kate

Welcome to *Age Old Problems: New Aged Care*, a podcast by Helping Hand that offers information and advice to help you find and access the right aged care services. This podcast was recorded on Kaurna land.

00:00:23 Kate

Hello and thank you for listening to *Age Old Problems: New Aged Care*. I'm your host, Kate Holland. Now in response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, the government is introducing some changes with the aim of helping older Australians live independently at home for as long as possible. One of those is a new home care program called Support at Home, which will eventually replace Home Care Packages.

00:00:43 Kate

This change was expected to come in from the 1st of July this year, but the changeover has been pushed back until the 1st of November. Support at Home will eventually replace the Commonwealth Home Support Programme too, but no earlier than July 2027. Now we all know that with change comes many questions and Helping Hand has received many from those with existing home care packages. Someone who holds plenty of answers is the wonderful Mel Bassham. She is Aged Care Connector for Helping Hand and she joins me now to explain a few things before any changes take place. Welcome Mel.

00:01:13 Mel

Hello. Thank you.

00:01:14 Kate

Now let's start with your role as Aged Care Connector. What exactly does that mean?

00:01:18 Mel

Many things. I can help people to register with My Aged Care and help them through the process to get access to supports at home. That could include anything from domestic assistance to social support to allied health therapies, it depends on what their need is. Do they have someone in their life that can support them but they're feeling a bit overwhelmed as well and they need a bit of a nudge in the right direction? It can be a one on one support face to face, helping them through the assessment as well. So depending on what the person needs I can help them to get access to what they require.

00:01:53 Kate

And how do they reach out and make connection with you?

00:01:55 Mel

So they can call our 1300 number or there is an email connect@helpinghand.org.au?

00:02:01 Kate

Is that a free service through Helping Hand?

00:02:04 Mel

Yes, currently it is. Yes.

00:02:06 Kate

Now that the introduction of the new Aged Care Act is on hold, which also has an impact on Support at Home, we understand there's still more information to come, but can you explain to the listeners exactly what Support at Home is and why it was going to be introduced?

00:02:18 Mel

It was introduced that Support at Home should be a fairer, user-friendly system to better meet the needs for older people. I do see how they have changed the way that it is structured, so it's about the clinical need, your independence need, and then your everyday living. And then obviously the contribution towards that has changed as well. So in that regard, it is making that fairer, and I do think that they're also looking at reducing the wait times to have access to those supports, as well as any goods and equipment or modifications to their home. Currently at the moment, you would need to accumulate your funds through the package, whereas with this new scheme there will be access to funding immediately. And also previously if you were waiting for a Home Care Level 4 for instance, which is the highest level at present, you could opt in to have a lower level. So a Level 2 and then you'd wait another time to get that extra funding. From what I understand, you will be allocated a higher level according to your needs and you will be able to access 60% of that funding after a small period of time, I think the aim is for three months that you would wait, which is significantly less where we're looking at 12 to 18 months at present. When I first started in this role in another organisation six years ago, the wait time was blown out to two years. So it has come down. It's just, for my liking, it's not soon enough to access, and people are wanting help and don't know what to do.

So when Support at Home comes in what will this mean for current and existing home care package holders?

00:03:59 Mel

So it depends on when their approvals are for their package that they have at the moment. And it all depends on one date which is the 12th of September. If you were approved and accessing, or on a wait list, prior to the 12th of September, you will transition, or in other terms grandfather, to Support at Home.

00:04:19 Kate

I see. So that's for people who were approved prior to September 12th 2024.

00:04:24 Mel

After that date. So if you're on the 13th of September and have an assessment and got approval, you will move in directly as being a new Support at Home customer.

00:04:32 Kate

OK, so there's a lot of information for people to try and get their heads around. I believe with this in mind, Helping Hand has set up a dedicated hotline to answer these questions?

00:04:39 Mel

Sure, yes, they have that number is 1300 050 435. We have deep dived into the world of Support at Home and we kind of know the ins and outs of how it works and if we don't know, we will look into it further and get back to that person if needed.

00:04:56 Kate

We'll put that number in the show notes so people can go to it. Has it been busy?

00:04:59 Mel

There's been times, yes, definitely. When Helping Hand has provided some information or when the government has sent out letters, we do get some concerns and worries, and by the end of the call, those people have been reassured and they understand that a bit more, so don't be worried. Have a conversation before you start worrying. More often than not, it's a better outcome of what they are actually seeing at the moment. There are some people that are better off, some people have had no change whatsoever. It's just business as usual.

00:05:29 Kate

Are there any repeated questions that seem to be coming up, I think co-contributions was one of the ones?

00:05:30 Mel

Definitely. Co-contributions and rolling over of built up funds. They've been for a period where they've had to save everything, the new model will show that you'll be able to reassess to get access to funding, to purchase goods and equipment and or have home modifications. At the moment it's Home Care Packages Level 1 to 4; new world: Support at Home it is a classification of between 1 and 8, so there's more higher levels of funding. So I think at present it's close to around \$60,000; new world: the highest level of packages is around \$80,000. That's kind of how I see it. The take away point is, don't panic. There will be support to access the goods and equipment. You will be able to roll over funds in the Support at Home. It's just not going to be as a higher level as what it was before because the government would like you to use your services, use that classification to ensure that you're getting those services at home, whereas at this point, at the moment, is some people don't use it for services and they go without certain things to save for equipment and that worries me because that can be a bad implication, that someone's not having a personal care because they need to get a wheelchair. Well, we want someone in that home to support that person.

00:06:50 Kate

Now when it comes to crunching these numbers, I do think there's a new tool that has just been released that might help people.

00:06:55 Mel

That is for the co-contribution. So it's a fee estimator that the government, because they're aligning that with the three areas of care: the clinical, the independence, and the everyday living – so that's separate to the budget. The budget you would go through with your coordinator or in the new world, it's called a care partner. So that's another change that's been implemented.

00:07:17 Kate

OK. So that co-contribution question that comes up, that calculator will help people to get their heads around that? And is that available online now?

00:07:23 Mel

Yes, that definitely is on the My Aged Care website. And then also you can have a conversation with Services Australia.

00:07:30 Kate

So if you were going to give a key piece of advice to someone in the process of transitioning from a Home Care Package to Support at Home, what would that advice be keeping in mind? And everybody needs to

know that the changeover is no longer July 1st. It's going to be the first November. So there's a bit more time to play with which is good. But should they be getting prepared as soon as possible anyway?

00:07:49 Mel

Definitely. My key takeaway advice is to firstly work out what kind of support that you really require, and looking at the areas of clinical, that would range from any allied health therapies to nursing. Anything to help you be independent and keeping mobile, whether it be an exercise class or a balance class. Then looking at your independence, so the social support – you're going to the shops, transport. And then everyday living is your gardening and domestic assistance, etcetera. Making sure that part of your assessment to get that, like so reaching out to My Aged Care for that assessment, and making sure that you share what you are wanting to access. What's your goal, how do you want that to work for you? I don't think you should discount the help that you might need.

00:08:42 Mel

Personally, from my experience, I've had grandparents that moved into residential aged care far too early, and knowing what I know now, if they'd had some more support at home, that would definitely have changed that outcome. So you know, it's the case of what I know now, I wish I knew back then. So I think that's what drove me to do what I do to today. I have had customers that I've helped before through an assessment process and it can be tricky, because the language isn't what you would normally use. So I've been an interpreter at times. I had a gentleman that I assisted who was having some issues with his back and there'd be times where he would be laid in bed every day. The question was 'how do you go about getting meals?' And he actually said, 'yep, I'm fine. I can cook and do all that.' But I knew that there was times where he wouldn't actually cook for himself. And so I just kind of steered the question of 'what do you do on your bad day?' 'What happens when you're bad?' And he said, 'well, I make a cup of tea, a piece of toast.' And that's not sustainable for a week in bed. So that changed the conversation to, 'would you like to have some meals delivered or would you like to have someone to help you to prepare some meals at home?' So very different outcome from that very first conversation of 'I'm OK. I can cook.' Yeah, he absolutely could cook on a good day, but not when he was having a bad back day.

00:10:02 Kate

So putting aside all of their complicated information around funding, all the rest of it, if somebody's goal for themselves or for a loved one is for them to live at home independently as long as possible, would you recommend the best starting point is reaching out and talking to somebody like you, because obviously your talent and skillset is in drawing the important information out to help assist them live as best possible.

00:10:26 Mel

Definitely talk to family, talk to My Aged Care, reach out to us, start the conversation. Don't be afraid to think that you need some help at home. It doesn't mean that you failed as an older person. It just means that you're gonna have some more people in your life to help you to support you be at home, be upright, reduce falls, whatever it might be that you need to keep being at home.

00:10:48 Kate

That's right. And that benefits not only them, but also their carers and their loved ones.

00:10:52 Mel

Absolutely, yeah.

00:10:53 Kate

Look, I think we must reassure people that throughout this transition, which is now ongoing and extended through to November, all the services that they're currently receiving will continue as normal and they'll get the same level of care and support, and I'm sure you and your team will make sure that people get updated information as soon as it comes to light at your end as well.

00:11:09 Mel

Definitely. You continue to call our hotline for the Support at Home if you wish. The organisation is also providing information and newsletters and updates by email too.

00:11:20 Kate

Well, it's a very, very busy time. All the people out there are lucky to have you with your passion and desire to want to help them. So thanks so much for helping to uncover some of the mystery around this for us today.

00:11:29 Mel

No problem, thanks for having me.

00:11:34 Kate

For more information on Helping Hand and their services please head to www.helpinghand.org.au or call Helping Hand directly on 1300 653 600.