

# *The National Report*

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Aged & Community Services Australia**



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## **ACSA National Conference Aged Care in the Fast Lane Wins the Checkered Flag**

ACSA's National Conference, held in Adelaide from 28 September to 1 October was, again, a great success in the quality of the international and local keynote speakers, the variety and information provided in concurrent sessions, the interplay of the increased number of panel discussions, the innovative products and services on display by exhibitors and of course the social and industry networking over the four days.

An unexpected highlight was the organ playing of former ACSA National President, CEO of Helping Hand and 2008 Churchill Fellowship winner, Ian Hardy, at the welcome reception held in the Adelaide Town Hall. The V8 car appearance pleased the petrol heads in attendance including current ACSA President Klaus Zimmermann, who was given a President's ride to the welcome reception.

Dr Penny Flett, CEO at Brightwater Care Group in Western Australia, was awarded the prestigious ACSA National Individual Award for Excellence, in recognition of her leadership and innovation in aged care. Since her appointment there in 1986, Brightwater has diversified into many service areas including rehabilitation, respite and residential care for younger people as well as running 20 facilities providing residential care. It has created new commercial and business development in catering and laundry services, and auspices research facilitation in dementia and education/industry areas.

She was the first Chair of the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency, has been on numerous other boards and enquiries and was Telstra's National Businesswoman of the Year in 1998.

Penny and other award winners will contribute to future editions of ACSA's Agendas Magazine, on their ideas and experience for developing and promoting excellence and innovation in aged care.

The full list of 2008 Award Winners and finalists is included at the end of this report.

Another important conference winner was Victoria - who won the DutchCare Shuffleboard competition, beating Queensland in a closely fought final.

Those who were unable to attend the conference can catch up with some of the speakers via the ABC website. Radio National's *Life Matters* program interviewed Dr Robyn Stone on workforce issues on Thursday 2 October and Dr Penny Flett on Wednesday 1 October. Radio National's *Perspective* program spoke with Dr Kate Barnett on Australian workforce issues, Jean Tinney on finding meaning and being old and in care and Philip Pearson on how assistive technology will help drive successful organisations to deliver services in the future.

Go to [www.abc.net.au](http://www.abc.net.au), click onto radio, then radio national then follow the links to those programs. The audio or transcripts can be downloaded.

Similarly, South Australia's Stateline Program will have the transcript of the feature story on how Tailem Bend has introduced Jack York's, *It's Never Too Late* interactive computer program for residential aged care. Go to [www.abc.net.au/stateline/sa/default.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/stateline/sa/default.htm)

Although not related to the conference session on this subject, the 7:30 Report ran a piece about consumer directed care on Wednesday night. To read the transcript, go to [www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2008/s2379479.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2008/s2379479.htm)

A DVD, *Ageing: Real and Ideal* was shown at the beginning of the conference, with commentaries by invited speakers, including many of the conference keynotes. It looked at the biggest issues in aged care at the moment from the consumers' point of view; how aged care could look in an ideal world and some of the steps being taken to make the ideals a reality.

The DVD was well received and could be useful as a community discussion opener on aged care. It is currently in post production and when available, details on costs and orders will be published in National Report and on the ACSA website.

## Speakers Papers

ACSA is working on putting all available conference papers and presentations on the website [www.agedcare.org.au](http://www.agedcare.org.au) which should be completed by 20 October at the latest.

## Productivity Commission

The Productivity Commission has released its long awaited research paper *Trends in Aged Care Services: some implications*. It builds on earlier work by the Commission in the areas of demographic change, health and aged care. The study analyses major trends in both demand for aged care services and the supply of these services. It also explores the implications for the future structure and mix of aged care services, the aged care workforce, and the capacity of the sector to lift its productivity growth.

ACSA CEO, Greg Mundy, commented that the report also builds on the Myer Foundation 2020 Vision reports, the Hogan Report, and quotes many ACSA publications in its bibliography.

It provides a very useful compilation of statistics, demographics, finances and workforce data relating to all aspects of aged care, and raises or discusses the current issues facing the industry, community, government and individuals. These include the need for change, separating or unbundling accommodation from care, greater choice for consumers, and genuine choice in care and the financial implications of those choices for the industry, community, government and individuals.

The report is available both online for downloading or – and we recommend this given the 240 pages involved – for purchase as a handbook. Go to [www.pc.gov.au](http://www.pc.gov.au) for more information.

## COAG Meeting Defers Issues Relating to Ageing

The COAG meeting in Perth on 2 October deferred, the issues relating to aged care until its next meeting in November. These are mainly to do with the proposed transfer of responsibility for home based aged care services from the States and Territories to the Commonwealth.

COAG issued a communiqué covering, inter alia, the *Reform of Roles and Responsibilities in Community Mental Health, Aged Care and Disability Services*. This stated: “As a major step in the new Commonwealth-State relations framework, COAG agreed to progress reforms to roles and responsibilities between the Commonwealth and States and Territories for community and residential care services for aged people, community and residential care for people with disabilities and community care and support services for people with mental illness.

These reforms will help build seamless service systems to meet better the needs of the aged, people with disability, people with mental illness and their carers on a national basis. The development of a reform package will be underpinned by the following principles:

1. **continuity of care for clients, which is responsive to changing needs:** delivered by seamless and responsive services tailored to changing care needs;
2. **simple access to services:** delivered by streamlined assessment and eligibility criteria;
3. **seamless transition of care for clients:** delivered by an assurance of client choice to receive ongoing ‘care in place’, and smooth interfaces between care systems;
4. **simplified accountability of governments to the community:** delivered by clearer responsibility of levels of government for policy and service provision to a particular client group;
5. **reform of roles and responsibilities should be budget-neutral for both levels of government:** delivered by the transfer of current funding to mirror the transfer of responsibilities for service provision; and
6. **creation of a national aged care system and national disability service system for community and residential care:** delivered by strengthened policy responsibility for delivery of the spectrum of community and residential care services for a particular client group.

COAG has also directed Senior Officials to establish a Roles and Responsibilities Working Group to develop a reform package for consideration by COAG at its next meeting. This work will include consultation with local government. This will deliver on COAG's commitment to fix the intersection of aged care and disability services and clarify the roles and responsibilities of governments. Governments are committed to working together to make sure that transition to new arrangements is managed carefully to ensure continuity of care for clients. The current mix of service providers will continue, including local government, state agency and non-government providers."

Full communiqué is at [www.coag.gov.au](http://www.coag.gov.au)

## Minister Guarantees Future of Meals on Wheels

In a related statement to COAG, Minister Elliot has promised that councils in Victoria would continue to provide meals on wheels and other home-based services for the elderly under the Government's proposed takeover of community care aged services. "Make no mistake, we want their involvement to remain," she said.

Representatives of Victorian local government, which are the most involved in providing home based care, said they were pleased that they would continue to have the option of delivering HACC services.

Meals on Wheels is a relatively minor part of the community care services funded by the HACC program and delivered by Local Government in Victoria.

## Myer Foundation to Review its 2020 Report

The Myer Foundation has engaged the Brotherhood of St Laurence to review the outcomes of its *2020 Report: A Vision for Aged Care in Australia*.

Gerry Naughtin will lead the review which will also look at how the philanthropic sector may be able to contribute to the development of the aged care sector.

It will include consulting with the sector and should take about six months to complete.

## Senate Inquiry into Aged Care Funding

As predicted by National Report, the Senate has established an inquiry into the adequacy of funding for the aged care sector on the motion of ACT Senator Gary Humphries.

The inquiry will investigate funding levels for aged care services, as well as related issues, and is due to report by the first sitting day of April 2009.

Senator Humphries flagged that the inquiry would consider whether aged care facilities in regional and rural areas require special consideration.

## **WA Concern at Bed Costs**

There have been recent media comments from both the WA Aged Care Industry Council and Aged and Community Services WA (ACS WA) about the rising cost of building accommodation and links with bed shortages in the state.

The sector has declined to take up more than a third of the Federal Government funded bed licences offered in the 2008 budget, citing building costs – higher than in other states - as the reason. WA is 2000 beds shy of government targets, and the shortfall is expected to increase rapidly.

Stephen Kobelke from ACS WA said the industry had spurned once-lucrative bed licences. "I was shocked," Mr Kobelke said. "Normally there would have been competition for those licences, but now the Government can't give them away."

He said several not-for-profit aged care facilities had told him they intended to hand back bed licences because they could not find staff to work in jobs paying less than \$40,000 a year.

Construction of new residential care homes had slowed to a trickle, Mr Kobelke said, due to a 9.3 per cent hike in building and operating costs in metropolitan Perth. "There is no business case to set up a new aged care home, even on a charitable basis," he said.

Anne-Marie Archer from the ACAA WA says slim profit margins means care providers cannot afford to build new premises to house the extra beds. She says soaring construction costs have put Western Australia in a worse position than other states.

## **Workplace Ombudsman's Audit into Aged Care**

Minister Elliot has used the Workplace Ombudsman's audit to highlight that 21 per cent of residential aged care facilities were in breach of the Workplace Relations Act. She used this figure in response to a letter from Aged Care Association Australia over industry pay and conditions.

As National Report advised in the previous issue (no.189) this report identified some minor issues, all of which have been the subject of corrective action subsequently. The Workplace Ombudsman's office is concerned to develop and maintain good relations with the sector and sees the report as an educative rather than punitive or 'shaming' tool.

## **Pension and Income Support Payments Increases**

Increases to pensions and other Income Support Payments, came into effect from 20 September. As a number of the residential fees and charge rates are linked to these rates, they will also vary from this date.

The Australian Taxation Office has also released the General Interest Charge (GIC) for the 1 October - 31 December 2008 quarter. This rate affects the maximum permissible accommodation bond interest rate for residents entering care during this period.

The revised Schedule of Fees and Charges will be forwarded by mailfax/bulk email to Providers as soon as possible.

The accommodation bond amount effective 20 September 2008 is \$141,000. This amount may apply to residents who first enter care prior to 20 March 2008 and who transfer an accommodation bond. The maximum permissible interest rate for accommodation bonds for residents who enter care in the 1 October to 31 December 2008 quarter is 11.31%.

Current and previous maximum permissible rates can be found on the Department's internet site at: [www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-finance-resfees.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-finance-resfees.htm)

## Unannounced Visits to Nursing Homes

As of October 2, the independent Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency has conducted a record 1001 unannounced visits, Minister Elliot, has announced. She has set a minimum target of 3,000 unannounced visits this financial year.

The 1001 unannounced visits were conducted between July 1 and October 2, resulting in action on six nursing homes including five sanctions.

Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency (July 1 to October 2)

NSW/ACT	VIC	TAS	SA/NT	QLD	WA	Total
333	296	30	100	141	101	1001

In addition, the Department of Health and Ageing has conducted 391 unannounced visits for the same period.

NSW/ACT	VIC	TAS	SA/NT	QLD	WA	Total
86	99	12	85	101	8	391

## Falls Prevention Guidelines

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care is reviewing the *Preventing falls and harm from falls in older people: Best practice guidelines for Australian hospitals and residential aged care facilities*, to incorporate the latest evidence and practice.

The Commission is seeking user views. Further information and a Falls Prevention Guidelines user survey is available for download at:

[www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/content/FallsGuidelines](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/content/FallsGuidelines)

Closing date for survey completion is 17th October.

## Residential Aged Care Coronial Communiqué

The September 2008 issue is now available and it features diabetes mellitus. The cases discussed demonstrate the need for having systematic approaches to managing residents with diabetes mellitus, and the nature of emergencies and complications that may occur. The issue is available at:

<http://www.vifm.org/n963.html>

## Age Discrimination Act

Attorney-General Robert McClelland and Minister Elliot have announced that the Rudd Government will amend the *Age Discrimination Act 2004* to remove the 'dominant reason' test.

The current test means that a person's age must be the dominant reason for something to constitute discrimination under the Act. This is inconsistent with the other federal unlawful discrimination laws.

Despite the former Government introducing this test in 2004, a bipartisan report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs '*Older People and the Law*' recommended its removal in 2007.

The Rudd Government accepts this bipartisan recommendation and will amend the Act so that a person need only show that their age was one of the reasons they were discriminated against.

Its removal will harmonise the Act with other federal unlawful discrimination laws, and better align it to State and Territory laws. The Government intends to introduce the amendment into Parliament later this year.

## Government Funds Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG)

Minister Elliot has announced \$450,000 over three years in funding to the AAG – a not-for-profit professional association for more than 800 aged care experts.

This funding will contribute to the salary of an executive officer to allow the organisation to continue to operate, and assist in informing and shaping the ageing research and education agenda. ACSA is a member of the AAG.

## Australian Unity Wellbeing Index

Australian Unity has released its latest Wellbeing Monitor which shows that the wellbeing of Australians, particularly women, has fallen significantly, with the fall strongly linked to increases in the Consumer Price Index.

The report shows that for the first time the wellbeing of males is higher than that of females, indicating to the report's author, Professor Bob Cummins from Deakin University, that females are more sensitive to the threat of the rising cost of living.

## Mandatory Flu Immunisation for Health Care Workers Proposal

Public health experts and practitioners at the recent National Immunisation Conference debated the question of compulsory 'flu jabs for health care workers'.

"It's common knowledge that health care workers tend to come into contact with more influenza than the average person, simply because the nature of their work involves seeing sick people. If they then go and pass that 'flu on to other people - well, that's not very healthy," explained Michael Moore, Chief Executive Officer of the Public Health Association of Australia.

“There has long been a school of thought within public health circles that influenza immunisation should be mandatory for health care workers – not just to minimise the risk for the workers, but also to stop them from spreading the flu to other people they come into contact with in the course of their work. We all realise that some people don’t like needles, but...surely a step like this is common sense,” said Mr Moore.

## Responding to Depression in Aged Care

Melbourne’s Deakin University has written a training program to help staff in nursing homes respond to depression.

The course was developed after a study by researchers from the university’s School of Psychology found that close to half of the clinical depression experienced by aged care residents goes undiagnosed. In the study, about 17 per cent of low care residents with mild or moderate cognitive impairment suffered clinical depression but fewer than half of these cases had been detected or treated.

Deakin Professor of Psychology, Marita McCabe criticised the common misconception that depression is a ‘normal’ part of ageing.

“Just because a person is getting older and they are in a nursing home, doesn’t mean they are going to be depressed.”

Professor McCabe said the new course, which is currently being implemented at a number of Melbourne nursing homes, will help improve the identification of depression and provide strategies for dealing with it. [www.deakin.edu.au](http://www.deakin.edu.au)

## Vision Australia Radio

Vision Australia Radio has released its summer (October) 2008 - (March) 2009 program guide.

The radio network incorporates 8 stations throughout Victoria and southern NSW, and works closely with Radio for the Print Handicapped which operates in Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Launceston, Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane.

Both radio networks generally present readings from daily newspapers, magazines and books, as well as community information programs. Further information at [www.visionaustralia.org](http://www.visionaustralia.org); [www.rph.org.au](http://www.rph.org.au).

## ACSA Awards 2008 Finalists and Winners

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### **Individual**

Sponsored by  
Health Super



**Dr Penelope (Penny) Flett**

CEO, Brightwater Care Group, Western Australia

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### **Employee**

Sponsored by  
Hesta Super Fund



**Sandra Morgan, Helping Hand Aged Care, Adelaide, SA**

Chic Taylor, Hunter Integrated Care, MuswellBrook, NSW

Samantha Whalan, James Watson Hostel, East Perth, WA

Susan Cunningham, St Andrews Village, Ballina, NSW

<b><i>Volunteer</i></b>	<b>Thomas &amp; Sarah Rainey, Presbyterian Aged Care, NSW</b>
Sponsored by Southern Cross Care (Aust) Inc	Catherine Gordon, John Cani Hostel, Mt Morgan, Qld Helen Williamson, Bankstown City Aged Care, Georges Hall, NSW
<b><i>Organisation –</i></b>	<b>Carrington Centennial Care Ltd, New South Wales</b>
<b><i>Residential Care</i></b>	IBIS Care Holdings Pty Ltd, New South Wales
Sponsored by Silverman Dakin	Masonic Care Queensland
<b><i>Organisation –</i></b>	<b>City of Canning, Western Australia</b>
<b><i>Community Care</i></b>	Amana Living, Western Australia Hunter Integrated Care, New South Wales
Sponsored by SmartLink International	
<b><i>Organisation –</i></b>	<b>Barossa Village Inc, South Australia</b>
<b><i>Retirement Living</i></b>	Outright winner – no finalists listed in this category
Sponsored by SmartLink International	
<b><i>Technology Innovation</i></b>	<b>Feros Care, New South Wales</b>
Sponsored by Paul Hartmann	Baptist Community Services of NSW & ACT Samarinda Aged Services, Victoria SilverChain, Western Australia
<b><i>Training Innovation</i></b>	<b>Baptist Community Services of NSW &amp; ACT</b>
Sponsored by Australian College of Health Service Executive	Glen Waverley Nursing Home, Victoria Lyndoch Inc, Warrnambool, Victoria SilverChain, Perth, Western Australia
<b><i>Newsletter -</i></b>	<b><i>The Bugle, Uniting Care Community Options, Victoria</i></b>
<b><i>Professional</i></b>	<i>Inside Focus</i> , SilverChain, Western Australia <i>Newslink</i> , Churches of Christ Care, South Australia
Sponsored by InSite	
<b><i>Newsletter -</i></b>	<b><i>The Pipeline, Peninsula Village, New South Wales</i></b>
<b><i>Voluntary</i></b>	<i>BV Lifestyle</i> , Barunga Village Inc, South Australia <i>Chatter</i> , United Protestant Association of NSW <i>The Grapevine</i> , Barossa Village Inc, South Australia
Sponsored by Australian Ageing Agenda	

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