

# *The National Report*

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**Aged & Community Services Australia**



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## **Australia Day Award Honours**

While around 80 Australians were rewarded for their sporting prowess or involvement, there were 12 citations for persons involved in aged care activities. A few more were acknowledged for their volunteer work but these covered a variety of activities.

Congratulations to all award recipients and to Dr Penny Flett who, as West Australian of the Year, was a finalist for the Australian of the Year.

## Aged Care Industry Award

On 23 January, the Full Bench of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) published four Stage 2 'exposure drafts' for Health and welfare services (excluding social and community services). These were the, *Aged Care Industry, Nurses Occupational Industry, Health Professionals and Support Services Industry and Occupational and the Medical Practitioners Occupational Awards*.

The exposure draft of the *Aged Care Industry Award 2010* not only covers "aged care provided in institutions but also extends to services provided in the home by persons who are covered by the award".

The AIRC commented that "This approach may require further consideration. There are a myriad of services for the elderly which are conducted by various organisations including private providers and local governments. Further, aged care activities may be an element in the provision of disability services. This will be examined further in dealing with social and community services in Stage 4"(which is when they deal with disability, social and community services).

Aged care nurses are ~~not~~ proposed to be covered under a Nurses Occupational Industry Award with the AIRC stating that "*the material advanced suggests at this stage that an occupational award is warranted.*"

All states have been asked to conduct an analysis of how the 'exposure draft' will impact on aged care employers in their states and to feed this information in to support a national response. Written comments on the exposure drafts of the Stage 2 modern awards must be lodged by 13 February 2009.

*The exposure draft is at:*

[http://www.airc.gov.au/awardmod/databases/health/Exposure/aged\\_care\\_exposure.pdf](http://www.airc.gov.au/awardmod/databases/health/Exposure/aged_care_exposure.pdf)

## Aged Care Work Beats the Downturn

*The Australian* newspaper reported on 26 January that "One sector appears immune from the growing shortage of jobs and looks set to expand through the global economic contraction - aged care."

John Stapleton wrote that "with unprecedented growth in the aged population, the aged care sector is predicted to double within 20 years, with an additional 4000 aged care beds a year forecast for the next decade." He quoted Mercy Health in Melbourne who announced last week it would need at least 250 extra staff by year's end for two new aged care facilities.

"The reality is the aged care sector marches to its own drum - there's escalating demand for all forms of aged care and a shortfall in skilled labour," Chief Executive Mr John Ballard said.

"The sector confronts a dramatic challenge - there aren't enough people to do the work. We're trying to keep up with growing demand for care in the face of unprecedented growth in the aged population."

ACSA CEO Greg Mundy was quoted in the article saying that aged care was an area where government investment would bring an immediate benefit in the creation of jobs.

He referred to the ACSA Budget submission proposing an additional \$1.4billion for a range of initiatives, which would translate to a 5 per cent increase in overall employment - 15,000 jobs on top of the 300,000 already in existence. "Aged care is chronically underfunded and staffing is very tight," Mr Mundy said.

"Because there's an excess of demand over supply, investing in aged care would not drive up prices. This is a very socially and economically responsible area in which to invest."

The Government's reported response was the repeat of 'record' funding levels in residential and community care, cash bonuses for nurses returning to work, and additional training places to help personal care workers in aged care homes improve their qualifications."

## **Supply Arrangements of PBS Medicines in Residential Aged Care Facilities**

ACSA has made a submission to the review of the fourth Community Pharmacy Agreement which is, inter alia, investigating the supply arrangements of PBS Medicines in Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF). Following discussions with pharmacists and medical practitioners, the review has published an issues paper on these arrangements, suggesting changes to the current system.

ACSA's submission comments on the proposed changes relating to resident transition between RACF and Hospital, use of Dose Administration Aids (DAA), Prescription Timing, Information Technology infrastructure, and right of choice. It also provides an industry viewpoint on the seven options proposed, supporting all except option 3 dealing with pharmacists obtaining Authority Approvals and repeats from Medicare. It also calls for further ethical consideration of option 4 – Refer to ACSA's submission, details below.

*These issues are discussed in more detail in Part C of the discussion paper. This Paper is easiest to find by doing a Google search for 'arrangements of PBS medicines in residential' then selecting 'cached' from alongside the displayed Guild website address!*

ACSA's submission may be viewed at: [www.agedcare.org.au](http://www.agedcare.org.au)

## **National Rental Affordability Scheme Round 2**

The National Rental Affordability Scheme Round 2 Call for Applications has opened. It is structured to maximize affordable rental housing outcomes both in 2008-09 and from 1 July 2009 onwards.

Proposals for 20 or more dwellings available for rent before 1 July 2009 will be assessed as they are received, and those available after 1 July will be assessed after Round 2 closes on 27 March.

More information at [www.fahcsia.gov.au/housing](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/housing)

## Legal Warning on Accommodation Bonds

The Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) has warned elderly people proposing to enter residential care to seek legal advice to ensure that their rights are protected before they pay accommodation bonds

President Danny Barlow said the LIV was concerned about a number of shortcomings with the present system of charging accommodation bonds. He said there was a wide disparity between the types and amounts of bonds, with some including additional payments such as interest while in other cases no bond is required

“These bonds, which generally range between \$100,000 and \$700,000, impose a large financial burden on residents. Bonds are not well understood or uniformly applied,” Mr Barlow said.

He said the LIV has written a submission to the Federal Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot, seeking a number of amendments to the Aged Care Act 1997.

These include an amendment to ensure that the bond amount will be lowered once the resident’s assets have been sold if paying the agreed amount would leave the resident with less than the required minimum amount of assets, currently \$35,500.

Mr Barlow said the LIV was seeking other amendments to ensure:

- If no enforceable written or oral agreement about paying a bond has been made between the provider and the resident before entry then no bond is payable
- If a written accommodation bond agreement has not been entered into before or within 21 days of entry to the facility, no bond is payable
- If a provider fails to comply with the rules about bonds set out in the Act, it cannot charge a bond.

Mr Barlow said accommodation bond agreements should set out the rights and responsibilities of the resident and provider and must be agreed to before entry.

However, the LIV said agreements are not standardised, vary amongst providers and are often lengthy and complex.

He said the LIV had produced a check list for clients and legal practitioners to run through before they enter into an accommodation bond agreement.

Some of the LIV’s ‘amendments’ would seem to be redundant but readers may like to review their suggestions and provide feedback.

*This agreement is available on the LIV website under recent submissions at [www.liv.asn.au](http://www.liv.asn.au)*

## Deeming Rate Reduction

From 26 January 2009 the upper deeming rate will decrease from 5 per cent to 4 per cent for the balance of financial investments over \$41,000 for single pensioners, or \$68,200 for a couple.

The lower deeming rate will remain at 3 per cent for balances up to these amounts – this rate was reduced in November last year.

## Falls-Related Traumatic Brain Injury in the Elderly

Brain Injury Australia (BIA), the national peak Acquired Brain Injury advocacy organization, is writing a policy paper for the Australian Government on falls-related Traumatic Brain Injury, particularly in the elderly, due at the end of March, 2009.

BIA is seeking the help of ACSA members to identify:

- how often they see falls-related Traumatic Brain Injury in the elderly in their work;
- any programs of rehabilitation or support they make available to the elderly, their families and carers after a falls-related Traumatic Brain Injury;
- whether falls prevention or behaviour management programs or education include information about falls-related Traumatic Brain Injury;
- how they help Brain Injury Australia make contact with the elderly who've survived a falls-related Traumatic Brain Injury and/or their families and carers; and
- receiving suggestions from clinicians, allied health professionals, advocates, other personnel in aged care who might have an interest in falls-related Traumatic Brain Injury.

*Anyone who can assist is invited to contact directly the Executive Officer of Brain Injury Australia, Nick Rushworth, on (02) 8507 6555 or via e-mail [nick.rushworth@bia.net.au](mailto:nick.rushworth@bia.net.au)*

## Fund Raising Suggestion

According to an ABC radio report on 26 January, the Cloncurry Shire Council planned to auction off its staff for an Australia Day celebration to raise money for a local aged care facility.

Five people, including the Shire's chief executive, would become temporary slaves to the highest bidders, with the proceeds to go towards the construction of an aged care facility in the town.

## Non Profit Sector Activity

- Non profit sector leaders met in Canberra on 19 December 2008 for preliminary discussions aimed at establishing mechanisms for effective national representation of the 700,000 non profit organisations - the third sector - in Australia. It will be seeking to find a collective voice to take to government, which has encouraged such an opportunity with the formation of the National Compact, social inclusion and other measures on its overall agenda.
- ACOSS has released a government commissioned report on consultations with the non profit sector regarding the level of interest for social compact. The consultations and submissions resulted in strong support for a national compact along the lines operating in some other countries. It should be underpinned by specific measures including a code of conduct, mediation approaches and agreed ways to resolve conflict. The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin welcomed the report. The next phase of work will commence early in 2009. *The report is available at: [www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/communities/australian\\_compact.htm](http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/communities/australian_compact.htm)*
- This has been followed up with a meeting with not-for-profit, welfare and church groups and the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard on 27 January. In a radio interview Minister Gillard said the meeting was for them to report to her what they were "hearing on the ground, what they're experiencing now and what they think will happen during 2009." She expected the discussion "to go across the full range – about unemployment, circumstances of carers, people with disabilities, the homeless and people facing mental health issues."

## **An Introduction to Aged Care DVD**

An edited version of the ACSA 2008 Conference DVD *Aged Care in the Fast Lane*, (minus specific references to the Conference) is now available for purchase from ACS SA & NT.

A useful addition to any organisation's resources, *An Introduction to Aged Care* will complement training sessions, staff induction programs, board briefings and more. The DVD costs \$19.80 including GST and postage and handling within Australia.

*The order form is available at:*

<http://www.agedcommunity.asn.au/publications/documents/OrderformDvd.pdf>

## **ITAC 2009 Conference - Call for Papers**

Submission of presentations for the 3rd Annual *Information Technology in Aged Care* Conference to be held 21 and 22 May 2009 at the Hilton Sydney are currently open.

The theme of the conference, *Sustaining Quality Through eCare*, emphasises the importance of information technology in establishing a sustainable, quality focused aged care environment.

The closing date for submissions is 16th February 2009.

*For further information visit <http://www.itac09.com.au/>*

*or contact Maureen Pang at HISA phone 03 9388 0555 or email [conference@itac09.com.au](mailto:conference@itac09.com.au).*

## **Minister's Awards for Excellence in Aged Care - Call for Nominations**

Official nominations for the 2009 Minister's Awards for Excellence in Aged Care are now open.

Awards are open to individuals and organisations across aged and community care including providers of Commonwealth subsidised residential aged care, CACP, EACH, EACHD, HACC and National Respite for Carers Program providers who demonstrate excellence in the provision of quality of care for older Australians.

Nominations close 27th February 2009 and winners will be invited to an award Ceremony in June.

*Further information and nomination kits can be obtained by contacting (02) 6289 3925 or visiting [www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-awards-ministers-excellence.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-awards-ministers-excellence.htm)*

## **GST and Grants**

The ATO has released an information sheet on how to treat grants for GST purposes, pending a review of GSTR 2000/11-Goods and Services Tax: grants of financial assistance, which is to be followed until it is withdrawn and a draft public ruling is issued.

<http://www.ato.gov.au/nonprofit/content.asp?doc=/content/00171997.htm>

## Visa Entitlements Online

The new Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) service is a free internet service enabling individuals and employers to check visa details and entitlements online. This means that employers can check that their workers have the entitlement to work in Australia.

*Employers can check how the VEVO system can work for them at:*

*<http://www.immi.gov.au/e visa/vevo.htm> or employers' immigration hotline on 1800 040 070.*

## Raising the Standard on Disability Rights

The Rudd Government has tabled a National Interest Analysis proposing that Australia become a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Under the Optional Protocol, a person who considers that Australia has not complied with the Convention and has exhausted all domestic remedies will be able to lodge a complaint with a specialised UN Committee.

“(This)... important step toward becoming a party to this Optional Protocol demonstrates our commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with a disability, both at home and abroad” Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities, Bill Shorten said.

The National Interest Analysis will now be considered by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

## Ageing and Pain are Not Natural Allies

Pain is not a ‘normal’ part of the ageing process and should not be accepted as such, according to a new study from the University of Nottingham in the UK which was funded by Help the Age and the British Pain Society.

The report draws on interviews with older people and a comprehensive literature review, and shows that over five million Britons aged 65 and over experience some form of pain and discomfort.

A number of persistent themes emerged from the interviews, in which participants were asked to assess the physical and psychological impact of pain on their lives.

Among the most common attitudes and response to pain were the ‘stiff upper lip’ approach, the fear of becoming a burden, a diminished capacity and a sense of isolation.

The report’s key recommendations included further training about pain in older people for all health professionals and the implementation of a standardised pain assessment tool for older people.

“Any health or social care assessment of an older person should include asking whether they experience pain. The assessment should recognise that older people may be reluctant to acknowledge and report pain,” said the study.

It also called for more research into pain assessment, the multidimensional nature of pain and the use of analgesics.

*This report (2.26 Mb) can be downloaded from the following website under recent publications:*

*<http://policy.helptheaged.org.uk/policy/default.htm>*

## Telemedicine and Aged Care

Professor Len Gray, author of the Two Year Review of the 1998 Aged Care Act, has co-authored an article with Anthony C Smith covering telemedicine and aged care which appeared in a recent edition of the *Medical Journal of Australia*. Its main points are:

- Telemedicine can help improve access to health care for people in rural and remote communities, but its uptake has been slow and fragmented.
- A telepaediatric service in Queensland, initiated in 2000, has made use of mobile “robot” videoconferencing systems. It has been cost-effective and well accepted by patients and clinicians.
- Telegeriatric services were instigated in Queensland in 2005, principally using videoconferencing. Telegeriatrics has been ideal for frail older patients in remote areas.
- For telemedicine to become a mainstream service, its focus must move beyond simply the provision of equipment and network connectivity.
- Telemedicine must be funded adequately if it is to be successful.

## Electronic Data Collection for Patient Care

A new AIHW report, *Review and evaluation of Australian information about primary health care: a focus on general practice* has encouraged a move to a national electronic data collection in general practice to help doctors make the best decisions about their patients' care.

The report found that general practice data should aim to include a patient's prescriptions and tests as well as symptom patterns. It suggests that building on existing systems in a move towards electronic data collection could also be used to help shape health policy.

For further information go to: [www.aihw.gov.au/publications](http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications)

## Cancer, and Arthritis and Osteoporosis Reports

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has released two new reports:

- *Cancer in Australia: an overview 2008* shows that new cancer cases are projected to increase by over 3,000 cases per year, with over 42,000 deaths in 2008, increasing by over 800 deaths per year. Australia's ageing population is driving an increase in the number of cancer diagnoses, hospital encounters and cancer deaths, an AIHW researcher said.
- *Arthritis and osteoporosis in Australia 2008* shows that they are amongst the most common long term chronic health problems in Australia, affecting one in six Australians, and over one third of people aged 65 or over and more than one half of those aged 85 or over.

Both reports are available at: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications>

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