

The National Report

18 December 2009 – Issue 218
Aged & Community Services Australia



Seasons Greetings
ACSA wishes everyone a
very **Merry Christmas** and
a **Happy New Year**



Contents

Political Changes
COAG Reform Process
Kerosene Baths Revisited
One Stop Shop for Medicare and Centrelink Agencies
Where Would We be Without Her?
Fire Safety Information in National Community Services Training Packages
Aged Care Legislative Amendments
ACFI Amendments
New Electronic Resident Agreements
Minor GST Change
Better Equipment to Assist Terminally Ill Patients
Funding Boost for Volunteers and Peak Body
Industrial Relations Reforms
Fair Work Information Statement
Training Funding Boost
Treasurer Calls for 2010-11 Budget Submissions
Department of Veterans' Affairs Christmas and New Year Arrangements
Aged Care and IT White Paper
Legislation for Unique Healthcare Identifier Number
Systematized Nomenclature of Medicine-Clinical Terms
Australia's Population Continues to Age
New National Broadband Network to Save Extra Costs of Ageing Population
Incontinence Program
Centre for Ageing and Pastoral Studies (CAPS) Conference
Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowships
Insulation Offer for Village ILUs

The first issue for 2010 will be distributed on Friday 15 January

Political Changes

Mr Abbott has promoted NSW Senator, Concetta Fierravanti-Wells to the position of Shadow Minister for Ageing, following his defeat of Malcolm Turnbull in the Liberal Party leadership challenge.

In her maiden speech to parliament, Mrs Fierravanti-Wells highlighted the importance of volunteering in the community sector.

“Throughout my community service, I have come to value highly the contribution of volunteers in Australia, whether this be in the family, amongst the sick, the disabled, the young or the aged,” she said.

Mrs Fierravanti-Wells will replace Margaret May who recently announced that she would not contest the next election.

Mr Abbott praised Mrs May for her work for older Australians.

Former Aged Care Minister, Bronwyn Bishop has been recalled to the Liberal Party’s front bench as Shadow Minister for Seniors and at a press conference in Canberra, Mr Abbott alluded to the 67-year-old’s age.

“I don’t know anyone with more energy than Bronwyn Bishop and in working with seniors she will be one of them as well as someone who is working for them,” Mr Abbott said.

Ms Bishop has been appointed to a new policy portfolio in an attempt to engage more actively with older Australians.

“Rather than deliver services through layers of bureaucratic channels, I believe senior Australians need a dedicated advocate for them,” Mr Abbot said.

“Bronwyn will ensure seniors are at the forefront of what we do, right across government. In this important role, Bronwyn will take on policy challenges such as pension adequacy, the interests of self-funded retirees, mature-aged employment, community security and active living.”

He is confident seniors will be happy to have one of their own representing them. "Ask them who they think is someone who embodies the dynamism and the commitment and the contribution that we want seniors to make to our society and I think that they'll say Bronwyn Bishop is ideally placed to do it," he said.

ACSA has written to Senator Fierravanti-Wells congratulating her on her appointment , and requesting a meeting to brief her on our policies and concerns. She will be on leave until mid January, but hopefully a meeting will be arranged shortly thereafter.

COAG Reform Process

There has been criticism from the health, hospital and allied health sectors about delays in the reform process and action on the NH&HRC Report. The proposed transfers of state and territory HACC assessment and community programs and funding to the Commonwealth, in return for a Commonwealth transfer of community mental health and disability programs and funding is now part of the COAG progress and is to be further discussed at the March 2010 COAG Meeting.

Some groups such as the Australian Dental Association are lobbying for revisions to the NHHRC Denticare proposal, and there is continuing debate about other 'big' changes such as Medicare Select.

Following the COAG meeting in Brisbane on 7 December, Kevin Rudd reported that there was a 'good discussion which lasted a couple of hours' on health and hospital reform, and that the future aged care was included in this discussion, along with future workforce training. "We also dealt with the particular interrelationship with the aged care system and the fact that we still have a problem of the proper coordination between the acute hospital system and aged care," Rudd said at the press conference.

He stressed the lengthy consultation process on the report would assist in framing the Government's final response in early 2010.

ACSA is currently finalising its response to the NH&HRC recommendations on aged care which are to be referred to the Productivity Commission for further work. ACSA supports the need for reform but will call for fine tuning of some of the specific proposals.

Kerosene Baths Revisited

Bronwyn Bishop was the Aged Care Minister in 2000 during the 'kerosene bath' scandal at Riverside Nursing Home in Melbourne. She was dumped from the ministry following the 2001 election. Mr Abbott, however, believes it's time to move on from that controversy and said that Bishop had introduced greater accountability following the incident.

However he was subsequently called to task by Minister Elliot who accused Mr Abbott of making insensitive remarks about the incident. Abbott was reported as responding to a query regarding the incident at a Liberal Party fundraising breakfast on 15 December:

"Can I say this about that? I mean, Bronwyn stopped It - Bronwyn didn't fill the bath, Bronwyn stopped the bath being filled." The remark was followed by an outburst of laughter. Justine Elliot called on Tony Abbott to immediately apologise for the insensitive remarks he made: "Making light of a horrific incident such as the use of kerosene baths in aged care homes is despicable.

One Stop Shop for Medicare and Centrelink Agencies

Agencies that have direct contact with the public, such as Medicare and Centrelink, will be merged into a "one-stop" shop under changes to the sector announced by Human Services Minister Chris Bowen on 15 December.

In a major overhaul to the way health rebates and welfare payments are delivered, the Government will begin establishing offices around the country that will incorporate Medicare, Centrelink, the Child Support Agency and disability service organisation CRS Australia under the one roof.

The Government is claiming the reform will deliver service that 'works for you'. Medicare and Centrelink will also be moved into the Human Services portfolio. Minister Bowen said the changes will improve service delivery and reduce bureaucratic processes and duplication.

"There is not enough coordination between our service delivery agencies," he said. "This reform is about cutting red tape and making processes more efficient for those who require a Government service and those who provide it."

The Government plans to set up 20 new offices around the country by the end of next year and will increase that to 40 by the end of 2012.

Almost 30 remote and regional Indigenous areas have also been earmarked as priorities for improved services and a mobile office for rural areas, based on the existing "drought bus" will also be established.

Mr Bowen says the changes are needed as the population ages and more older people will require pension and carer payments.

He says people who require assistance will only have to explain their situation once, instead of repeating their story to several agencies.

All agencies will also have the same phone number and website.

Mr Bowen has also been quick to reassure people that the changes are not about the collection of personal information in one central location.

"It is not a central database. We will not house an individual's personal, sensitive information in one place, vesting all control with one body or one card."

The Department will work with the Privacy Commissioner over the reforms and Mr Bowen says health information will not be included in the shake up. More information is available at www.worksforyou.gov.au

Where Would We be Without Her?

Minister Elliott has issued a reminder to aged care service providers to prepare for the expected heatwave and is encouraging all Australians to check on the welfare of their elderly relatives and neighbours.

"The elderly are particularly vulnerable when temperatures climb into the high 30s and beyond," she said.

"Aged care staff do a great job and are dedicated and committed to the care of older Australians, but it is important in heatwave conditions that they recognise residents may not be able to communicate their discomfort," Minister Elliot said.

Residential aged care homes had been advised to monitor the health of their residents during heatwave conditions. Reminders had also been sent to organisations caring for frail older people who live in their own homes.

Fire Safety Information in National Community Services Training Packages

The Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Australia Council (AFAC) on 15 December released a national initiative to embed basic home fire safety information into the national Community Services Training Packages.

The information includes identification of high risk groups, high risk behaviours and smoke alarms. The aim of the information is to support community service agencies providing services

to people in a community setting and reduce the risk of fire for community service recipients, workers and provider agencies. The information also has a high workplace to home transferability for the workforce.

Basic home fire safety information is now part of 9 separate units of competency which are part of a range of qualifications including those related to Aged Care, HACC and Disability workers. In addition to use of the materials by RTO's fire services nationally are recommending it's use by community sector providers in induction of new workers and skills maintenance for existing workers.



The material can be downloaded at no cost from :

Aged Care Legislative Amendments

Minister Elliot on 16 December has published a slew of amendments relating to payments made to residential aged care providers that were gazetted on 10 December. They are summarised below:

Classification Amendment Principles

The purpose of the Amending Principles is to:

- update references to documents generated by the Department of Health and Ageing in relation to the Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI); and
- to address an ACFI anomaly which is causing a number of permanent residents to be classified as requiring high level care when they do not require high level care services. This anomaly is to be addressed through amendments to the definition of 'high level of residential care' (and a consequential amendment to the definition of 'low level of residential care') within the Classification Principles.

ACSA was involved in the development of this through the ACFI Reference Group, and supports the change.

ACFI Amendments

The Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) has issued important advice in relation to the ACFI in two documents:

1. Role of healthcare professionals in complex pain management; and
2. Changes to the ACFI High and Low Care Definition.

The advice in the first document clarifies arrangements for claiming pain management services under ACFI 12 – Complex Health Care and in particular, requirements under items 3, 4a and 4b, as listed in the ACFI User Guide.

The second document on changes to ACFI definitions, announces the previously forecast changes regarding the High and Low Care definitions to bring them more into line with the former RCS funding instrument and ACAS assessment.

These outcomes address the concerns raised by members since the commencement of ACFI.

Further inquiries relating to the ACFI may be forwarded to the Aged Care Information Line on 1800 500 853 or via the DoHA website at <http://www.health.gov.au/acfi>

Rural Viability Supplement

Minister Elliot has published the Aged Care (Residential care subsidy - amount of viability supplement) Determination 2009 (No. 2) - Aged Care Act 1997 - Made under subsection 44-29(8) of the Aged Care Act 1997 - F2009L04655.

The increase of the supplement is in accordance with the 2009-10 Budget Measure *Measures to Support Older Australians – Aged care viability supplements increase*. The policies reflected in the Amending Principle were the subject of consultation with the aged care sector through the Ageing Consultative Committee, which comprises peak industry, professional and consumer bodies.

Information about the increase in the amount of the supplement will be disseminated via print and electronic media to approved providers.

Residential Care Subsidy Amendment Principles

Minister Elliot has also published the Residential Care Subsidy Amendment Principles 2009 (No. 2) - Aged Care Act 1997 - Made under subsection 96-1(1) of the Aged Care Act 1997 - F2009L04648.

The change to the Principles, implements the 2009-10 Budget Measures to Support Older Australians designed to rectify income testing arrangements in residential aged care. By removing the 28 day exemption to income testing arrangements for people entering a residential aged care service, this measure brings the income-tested fee into line with all other aged care fees, which are payable from the day a person commences being provided with residential care.

As with all other fees, the income tested fee will, from 1 January 2010, be paid from the first day that a person commences receiving care in a residential service. A person on pre-entry leave is taken to have commenced receiving care.

NEW (eRA) Electronic Resident Agreements

Special Introductory Offer (until 31 December 2009)

Revolutionary software to generate your resident agreements in just minutes is now available to ACSA members at the discounted price of \$255*. **But you've only got until 31 December to take advantage of this special price.**

You can now purchase licenses to access electronic resident agreements for Low Care, High Care, Extra Service & Respite which include automatic online updates, ensuring your agreements meet the latest legal requirements at all times. This hassle-free software generates agreements that include automatic calculation of daily fees, bond repayments, and related charges.

ACSA in conjunction with e-tools and Kennedy Strang Legal Group have developed this product to save you time, money and the embarrassment of having out-of-date agreements! Single, stand-alone, licences are available as is a network version for multi user sites. A special bulk purchase rate for 10 or more licenses is also available.

To find out more information or access an order form please go to:

www.agedcare.org.au/PUBLICATIONS-&-RESOURCES/Resident%20Agreements.html or contact e-tools at info@e-tools.com.au. Alternatively if you would like to arrange an online demonstration of the software, contact Mark Kong at e-tools on (03) 9571 8611. Order now to save money!

**The \$255 price is for a single licence and is available to ACSA members until 31 December 2009. The price for a single licence after 31 December 2009 will be \$299.*

Minor GST Change

A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Amendment Regulations 2009 (No. 2) The amending Regulations, inserted in Part 2-6 of the A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Regulations 1999 (the Regulations), remove the need to issue or hold an adjustment note for decreasing goods and services tax (GST) adjustments of \$75 or less. Previously, the amount was \$50.

Better Equipment to Assist Terminally Ill Patients

Minister Elliot announced on 11 December that 187 palliative care services will share in \$2.6 million in funding to help them upgrade their equipment.

Funding Boost for Volunteers and Peak Body

The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin has announced a \$250,000 funding boost to train new volunteers and assist in accreditation of new and existing volunteers.

It will help cover the costs of training, including general and mental health first aid, leadership, trauma management and working with vulnerable people courses.

Funding will be distributed nationally through the state and territory volunteering peak bodies to ensure training and accreditation courses are available to volunteers when they need it.

The Australian Government has also reaffirmed its financial support to Volunteering Australia following a scheduled review of the national peak.

Industrial Relations Reforms

The Workplace Relations Ministers' Council held in Melbourne on 3-4 December saw Ministers finalise two major reforms - the harmonisation of model work health and safety laws and a national workplace relations system for the private sector.

Fair Work Information Statement

The Fair Work Information Statement has now been gazetted. The Fair Work Ombudsman will shortly release additional information about the new workplace relations system on its website: www.fwo.gov.au.

The Fair Work Information Statement is a fact sheet that outlines information about an employee's entitlements at work. From the 1 January 2010, it must be provided to all existing employees or new employees before or as soon as practicable after commencing employment. Failure to do so could incur penalties of up to \$6,600 for individuals and \$33,000 for a company.

Training Funding Boost

The Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, said the Rudd Government is acting to address Australia's critical shortage of health professionals by investing \$157 million in clinical teaching and training infrastructure and to support undergraduate health professional students in 2010.

\$90 million will be provided over the four years from 2009-10 for capital projects that will support health professional students and trainees across a range of health disciplines.

The Grants, known as Innovative Clinical Teaching and Training Grants (ICTTG), are part of the nationally competitive infrastructure allocation, a key component of the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) commitment to investing in health workforce infrastructure.

Treasurer Calls for 2010-11 Budget Submissions

In order to allow views to feed into the Budget process, interested parties should lodge submissions as soon as possible, and before Friday, 29 January 2010. See link below.

<http://www.treasurer.gov.au/DisplayDocs.aspx?doc=pressreleases/2009/118.htm&pageID=003&min=wms&Year=&DocType=>

Department of Veterans' Affairs Christmas and New Year Arrangements

Veterans will be able to access key services throughout the Christmas and New Year period. DVA offices will close between 5pm on Christmas Eve and 9am Monday 4 January 2010, however key services will continue to be available to the veteran community during this period, including:

- crisis counselling – VVCS–Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service offers 24-hour crisis counselling through *Veterans' Line*. This service is available toll free on **1800 011 046** to veterans and peacekeepers of all conflicts, their families and eligible members of the Defence Force;
- transport – if transport is not booked prior to the Christmas period, it will need to be paid for up-front and reimbursement can be sought from DVA at a later date;
- hospital admissions – doctors can admit DVA patients into hospital and request admissions approval, where required, when DVA re-opens on Monday 4 January

Aged Care and IT White Paper

Australia's aged care sector urgently requires greater technology and IT infrastructure, according to a White Paper commissioned by KPMG/Church Resources.

The study highlighted gaps in access to technology between aged care and the wider community. It calls for an infrastructure injection to the ballooning industry, the organisations said in a media statement.

KPMG's Digital Business Partner, Malcolm Alder, says the findings demonstrate that technology and IT infrastructure have the ability to revolutionise the lives of residents, staff and families in aged care - particularly in regional areas.

"New technology allows us to help people in ways we never imagined even ten years ago. It is essential that as a nation we address the lack of technology infrastructure in place at aged care facilities and improve planning for future facilities," he said.

Click on link below to download the report.

<http://www.kpmg.com/AU/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/Pages/Golden-Opportunity.aspx>

Legislation for Unique Healthcare Identifier Number

The Rudd Government has released exposure draft legislation that will assign a unique healthcare identifier number to health care providers and consumers as part of building a secure e-health system in Australia.

These unique identifiers will provide a new level of confidence and accuracy when communicating patient information across and between private and government healthcare providers involved in providing care to patients.

Medicare Australia will be the initial operator of the healthcare identifier service. People do not have to apply for an identifier: it will be allocated automatically to every Australian who is currently on a Medicare card or a Department of Veterans' Affairs treatment card. People who are not covered by these will be allocated their identifier on an individual basis.

Use of the identifier is strictly limited to health information and health care with jurisdictional regulators including the Federal Privacy Commissioner providing independent oversight. It is planned to have the healthcare identifiers from mid-2010 subject to legislation having been passed by the Australian Parliament.

The exposure draft legislation and explanatory material can be found on the department's website at: <http://www.health.gov.au/ehealth/consultation>

Systematized Nomenclature of Medicine-Clinical Terms

The National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) has launched SNOMED CT-AU (Systematized Nomenclature of Medicine-clinical terms). Customised for the Australian market, it is a clinical terminology that also provides a platform for the incorporation of new Australian terminology content.

The capture and sharing of clinical information between health providers is fundamental to the delivery of high quality health care and, ultimately, the success of e-health in Australia. SNOMED-CT AU standardises clinical technology so that both patients and their healthcare providers can recognise and collate the information. The terminology aims to give e-health applications a common language to ensure consistency in information that is recorded and exchanged.

The initial release of SNOMED CT-AU includes all relevant components from the SNOMED CT international release, a list of the Australian English preferred descriptions, context specific reference sets designed to support the data requirements for NEHTA's clinical information specifications, documentation explaining the release and viewers to access the files in Windows and Mac formats. The product is accessible through a single set of download files.

The next release will be available in May 2010 with updated international and Australian content. Subsequent releases will then be available every six months. For product enquires email terminologies. [email: feedback@nehta.gov.au](mailto:feedback@nehta.gov.au)

Australia's Population Continues To Age

Australia's median age (the age at which half the population is older and half is younger) increased by 5.1 years over the past 20 years, from 31.8 years at 30 June 1989 to 36.9 years in 2009 according to preliminary figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Over the past 20 years, the proportion of children aged 0-14 years decreased from 22.2% to 19.2% of the total population. During the same period the proportion of people aged 65 years and over increased from 11.0% to 13.3%, and people aged 15-64 years increased from 66.9% to 67.5% of the total population. Of all the states and territories, Tasmania recorded the highest median age (39.6 years) and the Northern Territory the lowest (31.2 years) at 30 June 2009.

To find out more including population estimates, visit www.abs.gov.au

New National Broadband Network to Save Extra Costs of Ageing Population

Australia's National Broadband Network could pay for itself in just 10 years thanks to spillover savings in four key sectors of the economy - electricity, health, transport and education -- according to a just published OECD study, Network Developments in Support of Innovation and User Needs.

Online magazine Crikey reports that the study has found "A cost savings of between 0.5% and 1.5% in each of the four sectors over 10 years resulting directly from the new broadband network platform could justify the cost of building a national point-to-point, fibre-to-the-home network." The study also supports public-sector investment in the NBN. Private telcos need to see direct returns, it says, but governments can justify investments "relatively easily" through minimal savings elsewhere in the economy.

"There could be cases where the social returns of broadband connectivity are potentially much larger than the costs of building the network but the operators do not invest because their private returns would not justify the investment," the report says.

The report says health systems face "tremendous pressure" to improve health quality, accessibility and outcomes in an ageing population.

"Broadband increases the potential for more doctor-to-patient interaction between hospitals/doctors and end-users at home. Two specific areas where broadband will likely have a

significant impact ... are increasing the efficiency of health monitoring and reducing the costs on the system via remote consultation and intervention, particularly as the percentage of the population over age 65 rises significantly."

http://www.oecd.org/document/58/0,3343,en_2649_34225_44245946_1_1_1_1,00.html?source=emailer

Incontinence Program

The National Prescribing Service (NPS) has developed a new program, managing urinary incontinence in primary care.

NPS clinical adviser, Judith Mackson said health professionals are encouraged to routinely ask about a history of incontinence in women who are at a greater risk of becoming incontinent. This includes those who have experienced recent childbirth, are overweight or have chronic health conditions. www.nps.org.au

Centre for Ageing and Pastoral Studies (CAPS) Conference: 28 September to 1 October 2010 Canberra. Call for Abstracts

The fifth national CAPS Conference to be held in Canberra is now accepting registrations. CAPS also invite submissions of abstracts related to any of the conference themes for oral presentation in the concurrent sessions. For more information: www.centreforageing.org.au/

Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowships

The Winston Churchill Trust was established in Australian in 1965 to perpetuate and honour the memory of Sir Winston by the award of Churchill Fellowships to Australian citizens. The Trust exists to support Australians in all fields of endeavour whose expertise has progressed to the point where an overseas research project would be of value in improving their contribution to their field and the Australian community.

A number of Fellowships are offered for specific study topics including in the health and medicine areas. Applications must be submitted before 26 February 2010. For more information, visit www.churchilltrust.com.au

Insulation Offer for Village ILU's.

ACSA has entered into a business alliance with DCM Insulation whereby DCM will contribute \$20 to the ACSA Image Campaign for every independent living unit (ILU) that installs insulation through their company. The Federal Government's Energy Efficient Home package funds up to \$1,200 per dwelling for ceiling insulation. This amount covers the cost of insulating the vast majority of ILUs as they are smaller than an average dwelling. Ceiling insulation cuts electricity bills and additional funds for the Image Campaign will benefit our industry – both good outcomes. For more information please see the attached flyer.

Aged & Community Services Australia
Level 1, 36 Albert Road, South Melbourne Vic 3205
Ph: 03 9686 3460
Email: info@agedcare.org.au www.agedccare.org.au



Free* insulation for village ILU's from DCM Insulation, your ACSA Business Alliance Supplier

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**\$1,200 IS AVAILABLE NOW
FOR EACH VILLAGE ILU**

**Call today (02) 9810 5555
info@dcminsulation.com.au**

**You can have free* ceiling insulation fitted to all your ILU's
by DCM Insulation and at the same time support ACSA's
"CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU" campaign.**

Ceiling insulation cuts electricity bills by around 40%. The energy savings achieved make it the most cost effective sustainability action you can implement. The Federal Government's Energy Efficient Home Package funds up to \$1,200 per dwelling for ceiling insulation – which covers the cost of most rooms because they are smaller than the average dwelling.



DCM – Your ACSA Business Alliance Supplier

DCM Insulation is an ACSA Business Alliance Supplier, and will make a contribution of \$20 for each dwelling that we install to support ACSA with its image campaign.

Quality Boral Batts

DCM only utilises quality Boral insulation batts and Australian Standards down light enclosures, and has constant stock available for rapid installation.

Who is DCM?

DCM delivers tailored sustainable energy solutions exclusively to the village and care sectors. DCM Solar is Australia's largest domestic solar company, currently installing over 9,000 ILU's with solar panel systems.

Obtain a quote now

DCM Insulation has accredited installers across Australia ready to assess your facility and provide you with a quote this week – in line with all Federal Government requirements.

Call now for a no obligation quote from DCM on free* insulation and support your industry association - ACSA. P:(02) 9810 5555 E: info@dcminsulation.com.au



* Householder eligibility criteria applies. Government Home Ceiling Insulation Program covers the cost of installation labour and materials up to \$1,200