

# *The National Report*

**15 January 2010 – Issue 219**  
**Aged & Community Services Australia**



# HAPPY NEW YEAR!

## Contents

*2010 A Major Year for Aged Care*  
*ACSA Response to NHHRC Final Report*  
*Author of the Hogan Report Dies*  
*ACSA National Housing Report*  
*ACSA National Partner Achieves World Ranking*  
*Financial Performance Data*  
*Aged Care Growth Rate*  
*User Friendly Housing for Older Australians a Step Closer*  
*28 Day Income Tested Fee Exemption Ends- Interim Fee Option*  
*Residential Care Agreements*  
*Accommodation Bond Interest Rate*  
*Emergency Events and Aged Care*  
*ACFI User Guide and ACFI Answer Appraisal Pack*  
*Productivity Commission Review – Government Responds*  
*Submissions for Improving Access to TV and Cinema for the Hearing and Vision Impaired*  
*Disability Investment Group's Report*  
*Consumers Must Contribute To Reform*  
*Medication Management in Aged Care Site*  
*Using Phones to Monitor Diabetes*  
*Working Carers Gateway Website*  
*Falls Prevention for Older People Living at Home*  
*Arthritis Pain Diary*  
*Geriatricians Consult Using Videoconferencing*  
*Recent Publications*  
*NZ Research on Characteristics of Residents in Aged Care*

## 2010 Make or Break Year for Aged Care

ACSA members, and all aged and community care services, staff, residents and families, face a big 2010. The Federal Government is preparing for an election, as are governments in South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria. The Rudd Government is deciding on its response to the final report of the National Health and Hospitals Commission (NHHC) in the context of the budget, the election, the continuing economic repercussions of the Global Financial Crisis, and a growing aged population.

Aged care is part of the mix in all these considerations and ACSA's Image Campaign - *Can't Do It Without You* - will ensure that we stay part of the debate. Play your part by supporting the campaign and ensuring your message is getting out locally. Go to the ACSA website for details [www.agedcare.org.au](http://www.agedcare.org.au)

ACSA's two national conferences this year - the Community Care Conference *Next Generation* at the Gold Coast in June and the National Conference - *Twenty10: Explore the Possibilities* in Hobart in September - will facilitate political and policy debate on aged and community care.

This is not the year to take a back seat. Get involved and make aged care a priority for all.

## ACSA Response to NH&HRC Final Report

In its formal response to the NH&HRC final report *A Healthier Future for All Australians*, ACSA has welcomed the proposed reforms for care.

ACSA's paper outlines the industry's initial views on the reform and proposes a range of short term measures to alleviate current inequities and funding shortfalls, transition plans for necessary reforms, and long-term funding proposals for a sustainable, responsive and consumer-driven aged care system. The full paper is available at [www.agedcare.org.au](http://www.agedcare.org.au)

## Author of the Hogan Report Dies

Warren Hogan, the author of the 2004 *Review of Pricing Arrangements in Residential Aged Care* died in Sydney in December aged 80. According to his obituarist, Malcolm Brown, Professor Hogan's report ... "heralded a cultural shift, advocating a more market-oriented approach in keeping with his philosophy." ACSA extends condolences to his family.

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/obituaries/warrior-in-sydneys-economics-war-20100104-lq2s.html>

## ACSA National Housing Report

Issue 4 of ACSA's *National Housing Report* is available at:

<http://www.agedcare.org.au/AGED-CARE-NEWS/Housing-and-Retirement-Living.html>

## ACSA National Partner Achieves World Ranking

ACSA's National Partner, the Australian architecture firm ThomsonAdsett, has been ranked in the top 100 of the world's largest architecture firms by number of architects employed.

The top 100 list produced by British magazine BD World Architecture ranks firms internationally by categories including number of staff, revenue and number of creative staff. ThomsonAdsett's media release says: "Group Chairman Chris Straw sees the achievement as a validation of the firm's many years of growth tempered with strong business planning and solid financial and management systems." The firm has grown by developing specialised architectural disciplines to cater for individual industries, particularly aged care, retirement living, commercial developments, health and education. "Part of our growth strategy has been to locate offices to service regional areas such as Cairns, Rockhampton, Lismore and the Gold Coast as well as in the larger metropolitan centres," says Straw. Having these regional locations allow us to defeat the tyranny of distance and provide maximum amenity to our clients who we recognise are often not based in the capital cities."

## Financial Performance Data

De-identified financial performance data provided to the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) by residential aged care facilities for 2007-08 is now available on the Department's website to assist residential aged care providers compare performance.

Minister for Ageing Justine Elliot said the data will assist providers to compare their performance with similar organisations and help to identify areas for business improvement.

The data is derived from approved providers General Purpose Financial Reports (as a precondition for the Conditional Adjustment Payment (CAP)) and includes information on revenues, costs, facility size and location across the industry.

This information and data from 2006/07 General Purpose Financial Reports, is available at:  
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-resid-care-fin-data.htm>

## Aged Care Growth Rate

Major components of health spending are expected to keep increasing by more than the government's target rate, with aged care rising at an annual average real growth rate of 13.5 per cent, pharmaceutical costs rising by 4.9 per cent and Medicare costs at 2.5 per cent, according to a report by David Uren and Samantha Maiden in *The Australian* on 12 January.

They wrote that figures provided by the Department of Finance show that half of all government programs are already rising in cost by more than 2 per cent a year, after allowing for inflation, and are expected to continue doing so over the next three years.

The government has vowed that total spending growth will be kept below that threshold once the economy's growth rate returns to a normal 3 per cent.

They conclude that "Kevin Rudd's plan to get the budget back into surplus is being undermined by blowouts in spending on health, welfare and interest payments, making the need for future budget cuts more likely."

## User Friendly Housing for Older Australians a Step Closer

ACSA has welcomed the Victorian Government's move to amend building regulations to allow for more practical and accessible housing, as being long overdue.

CEO Greg Mundy said that ACSA and the Council on the Ageing (COTA) have been strong advocates for modified building standards for many years.

“Victoria is to be congratulated for leading the country in developing standards which will improve the lives of older people and those with a disability, Mr Mundy said. “However, because the ageing of Australia's population is set to become an issue of unprecedented significance, standards for accessible housing must be adopted nationally.

If the Federal Government is genuine in its commitment, a national policy to amend the Building Code of Australia to ensure a safe and accessible environment is a natural step and one which should be undertaken as soon as possible.”

Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities Bill Shorten has also praised the Victorian plan, and urged the other states to follow their lead and work to improve the accessibility of all new homes.

## 28 Day Income Tested Fee Exemption Ends- Interim Fee Option

Providers have been advised by DoHA that from 1 January, 2010, residents who have the means to pay an income tested fee will be asked to pay the fee from the first day that they receive care in a residential aged care facility. This measure ends the 28-day exemption period for new residents, introduced to allow time for assessments to be completed.

However, if the necessary information for the assessment is not available on the first day, DoHA advises providers can ask residents to pay an interim fee, which may avoid a large back payment once their income tested fee has been determined.

This measure affects only those residents entering a facility after 1 January. No existing residents will be affected.

## Residential Care Agreements

The electronic residential care agreements (eRA) developed by ACSA, ACAA, Kennedy Strang Legal Group and e-tools, have been updated to incorporate the fee change referred to above.

Agreements for low care, high care, extra service and respite using revolutionary software are available to ACSA members for just \$299. The Agreements include automatic online updates, and calculate fees, bond repayments and related charges.

Free online demonstrations and orders are available at: [www.e-tools.com.au](http://www.e-tools.com.au)

## Accommodation Bond Interest Rate

DoHA has set the maximum accommodation bond interest rate for residents entering residential care between 1 January and 31 March 2010. The new rate is 7.95%

Current and previous maximum permissible interest rates are available at:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-finance-gic.htm-copy2>

The revised Schedule of Fees and Charges effective from 1 January 2010 are available at:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-finance-resfees.htm>

## Emergency Events and Aged Care

DoHA advises its *Risk Management for Emergency Events Fact Sheet* has been mailed/faxed to all providers on 23 December. The fact sheet has been prepared in response to a range of questions from approved providers of residential aged care and community care regarding risk management for emergency events. Providers are advised to contact local emergency services or state fire authorities in the event of a significant emergency.

The fact sheet, to be updated in response to further queries from providers is available at:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-mailfax-2009-2312aa.htm>

## ACFI User Guide and ACFI Answer Appraisal Pack

The ACFI User Guide and ACFI Answer Appraisal Pack have been updated. Key changes include the addition of a diagnosis of 'Bipolar' and further clarification on complex pain management.

The updated guide and appraisal pack is available at: <http://www.health.gov.au/acfi>

## Productivity Commission Review - Government Responds

The Minister for Finance and Deregulation, Lindsay Tanner, has released the Government's response to the Productivity Commission's *Annual Review of Regulatory Burdens on Business: Social and Economic Infrastructure Services* report, which presented 42 recommendations to reduce regulatory burden in the economic and social infrastructure sector, including aged care.

The Government has accepted 21 of those recommendations and a further five in principle. It has previously announced the Productivity Commission would undertake an inquiry into aged care. Mr Tanner said the majority of the remaining recommendations were related to issues the Government plans to advance through other means or considers the current level of regulation already sufficient.

In relation to aged care, the Government has responded positively to submissions made by ACSA and members including:

- Aged Care Accreditation and Complaints Investigation scheme reviews will address the need for clarification of the compliance monitoring role of DoHA and the Aged Care standards Accreditation Agency.

- The review of aged care accreditation will consider the interface between the aged care accreditation standards and state or local government regulatory requirements to remove onerous, duplicate and inconsistent regulations.
- A more risk-managed approach will be taken to unannounced visits from the Aged Care Standards Accreditation Agency to focus its visit activity on underperforming homes.
- Annual fire safety declaration abolished for homes which have met state and local government standards.
- Building Codes to be consolidated so that only one set of standards will apply to aged care.

The Government has rejected requests to allow a longer time period to report missing residents to the Department (it wishes to continue to be advised at the same time as police). It has also rejected the call for a choice of accreditation agencies to introduce competition and streamline processes who are engaged in multiple aged care activities.

The full Productivity Commission report and Government response is available at:  
<http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/regulatoryburdens/social-economic-infrastructure>

## Submissions for Improving Access to TV and Cinema for the Hearing and Vision Impaired

Communications Minister, Stephen Conroy, and Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities, Bill Shorten MP, have released a discussion report, *Access to Electronic Media for the Hearing and Vision Impaired: Approaches for Consideration*.

The report identifies ways to improve audio description and captioning levels on free-to-air and subscription television, films in cinemas, DVDs and audio-visual content on the internet.

The paper is now available from the Department in print and audio file, and via printed ink and Braille copies as requested.

Submissions are invited from organisations and individuals, and must be received by 29 January.

Further details on the report and guidelines for submission are available at:

[http://www.dbcde.gov.au/television/television\\_captioning/television\\_captioning\\_discussion\\_paper/media\\_access\\_discussion\\_report](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/television/television_captioning/television_captioning_discussion_paper/media_access_discussion_report)

## Disability Investment Group's Report

The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, has released the Disability Investment Group's report, *The Way Forward: A new disability policy framework for Australia*. The report is part of the Government's commitment to set out a ten year agenda for coordinated, across-government action for Australians with disability.

The Government has already responded to the report's primary recommendation, by announcing that the Productivity Commission will undertake a comprehensive feasibility study into a national disability insurance scheme.

The Government has also announced the appointment of John Walsh as a part-time Associate Commissioner to the Productivity Commission inquiry. Mr Walsh was instrumental in the development of the Australian Registry of Spinal Cord Injury and is a board member of the NSW Motor Accidents Authority and the NSW Home Care Service.

The Government and the Productivity Commission will also be advised by an independent panel of seven people who bring considerable experience across the disability sector, including Chair of Yooralla Bruce Bonyhady, Chair of the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council Rhonda Galbally, and Australian Medical Association President Andrew Pesce.

The Productivity Commission will report to the Government in July 2011.

The Disability Investment Group was established by Community Services Minister Jenny Macklin and Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities Bill Shorten last year to provide advice on ways to explore funding ideas from the private sector to help people with disabilities and their families access greater support and plan for the future.

The report and membership of the Disability Investment Group can be found at [http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/news/Pages/disability\\_investgroup\\_report.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/news/Pages/disability_investgroup_report.aspx)

## Consumers Must Contribute To Reform

A Canadian expert on health leadership says aged care clients and consumers must be included in the health reform process.

Dr Don Philippon visited Australia in 2009 as a guest of the Australian College of Health Services Executives and Mayfield Education.

The Professor of Health Policy and Management at the University of Alberta said the needs of patients and clients are often left out of reform discussions. "A lot of people are recognising the need to involve consumers in health reform these days but when the government starts to look at reform and the professional groups get involved, they tend to downplay that side," Dr Philippon said. "They give lip service to the idea and when they set up the committees and write the reports, it comes back to the structural issues."

The Canadian province of Saskatchewan is currently undertaking an initiative to review the health system from the patient's perspective Dr Philippon said Australia should adopt a similar perspective as it carries out its own reform process.

"We need more focus on health literacy, advocacy and navigation," he said. "There are a lot of services out there but how you access them becomes very mind boggling. People end up bouncing from one service to another."

"We also need more healthcare advocates who can assist people to navigate the system. Often under the current system that responsibility falls on the family members who don't necessarily have the skills to do that."

Dr Philippon said aged care services would benefit from a greater focus on health promotion and multidisciplinary care teams. The full report is available at: <http://www.patientfirstreview.ca/component/content/article/29-frontpage/122-patient-first-review>

## Medication Management in Aged Care Site

This National Prescribing Service site provides access to resources and tools related to medication management. The site has been designed for registered nurses working in residential aged care and each resource and tool has been reviewed to assess its usefulness for this audience.

[http://agedcare.nps.org.au/medication\\_mx](http://agedcare.nps.org.au/medication_mx)

## Using Phones to Monitor Diabetes

Diabetes patients will be able to monitor their blood glucose levels more frequently, keep more accurate records and better manage their condition with Telstra's launch of Australia's first commercially available mobile phone application for people with diabetes.

The Telstra Diabetes Management Online Service involves transmitting blood glucose readings wirelessly from a Bluetooth enabled blood glucose meter to a compatible mobile phone running a specialised application.

The information is sent to a secure database which can be accessed via a mobile phone, or online, by the patient, GPs and care providers.

If a customer registers a reading that is above their diagnosed threshold, they receive an SMS. Their care team are also advised. The product can also be used for medication reminders and reminders to perform a blood glucose test.

More information about the Telstra Diabetes Management Online Service including joining the service, monthly and call costs, and costs for the blood glucose meter, is available online at

[www.bigpond.com/health/my-glucose/](http://www.bigpond.com/health/my-glucose/)

## Working Carers Gateway Website

This website offers support and advice to people juggling work and care commitments. It has specific advice for aboriginal carers, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as employer and employee segments. [www.workingcarers.org.au](http://www.workingcarers.org.au)

## Falls Prevention for Older People Living at Home

DoHA has published a falls prevention guide for older people, particularly those living at home, their families and carers. It describes risk factors, and what to do in the event of a fall. The guide is available in English, Polish, Chinese, German, Greek and Italian at:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlth-strateg-injury-publications.htm>

## Arthritis Pain Diary

To help people work with their doctors to determine the best pain management treatments for them, Arthritis NSW and the National Prescribing Service (NPS) have developed a pain management diary in which people can record detailed information about the type and nature of their pain.

This follows research conducted by Arthritis NSW showing that many people are over-using general analgesics to relieve break-through pain, which can result in further health complications.

“The pain management diary is very detailed. It has space to record the person’s mood, sleep and physical activity as well as the steps taken to alleviate the pain and whether they worked. These things all need to be considered in discussion with a health professional when developing an effective pain management plan,” Arthritis NSW CEO Karen Filocamo said.

NPS CEO, Dr Lynn Weekes said the diary will help patient/ doctor communication and enable people to take a more active role in their own health management.

“The diary will empower people to take better control of their health and will lead to more effective use of pain relief medicines,” Dr Weekes said.

A summarised version of the resource is also available in Chinese. The Diary is available at [www.nps.org.au/manageyourpain](http://www.nps.org.au/manageyourpain)

## Geriatricians Consult Using Videoconferencing

Having patient consultations conducted by geriatricians using telemedicine technology is an acceptable alternative to in-person consultations when hospitals are unable to employ a geriatrician to work on site, according to the authors of a study published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, and released on 13 December 2009.

Prof Len Gray, Professor of Geriatric Medicine at the University of Queensland, and his co-authors conducted an observational study in the geriatric ward of Toowoomba Base Hospital, where ward-based consultations with an off-site geriatrician are delivered by video conference.

“Weekly rounds are conducted by video conference. A web-based clinical support system enables the remote geriatrician to have accurate clinical information, particularly with reference to geriatric syndromes and functional and psychosocial problems,” Prof Gray said.

Interaction is achieved through a wireless, mobile video conferencing apparatus, which enables two-way vision and conversation between the geriatrician and the patient, accompanying nurse and junior house doctor. The camera is controlled remotely by the geriatrician and permits panning and a zoom capability sufficient to read 12-point text.

Of 15 patients who were interviewed, most found both the technical aspects and the medical consultation to be acceptable.

The video conferencing model limits the ability to perform hands-on clinical examination, although there is evidence that cognitive assessment and neurological examination can be performed reliably by video conferencing.

The potential loss of accuracy in assessment requires further research. However, for many communities, a telemedicine service will be the only viable means to the expertise.

The authors envisage the model being extended to other areas including geriatric consultation in small rural hospitals.

## Recent Publications

These recent publications may be of interest.

- *General practice activity in Australia 2008-09*, by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and the University of Sydney. [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)
- Prevention of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and chronic kidney disease: targeting risk factors (AIHW) [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)
- Australian Social Trends, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) quarterly snapshot of society. The December quarter edition of *Australian Social Trends, 2009* (cat. no. 4102.0) is available for free download from the ABS website: [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au).

## NZ Research on Characteristics of Residents in Aged Care

A 20-year University of Auckland study has shown that the population in residential aged care has become older, frailer and more dependent, suggesting that new models of care are required.

The Older Persons' Ability Level (OPAL) study involved four census surveys of people living in rest homes and private hospitals ("residential aged care") across the Auckland region in 1988, 1993, 1998, and 2008.

The data show that since 1988, despite a 43 percent increase in the number of people over 65 years of age, the number of residential aged care beds increased by only three percent. The proportion of the population over 85 years living in residential aged care dropped dramatically from 40 percent to 27 percent.

Over the same period the median age of residents increased from 83 to 86 years, and their length of stay decreased from a median of 3.0 years to 2.5 years.

Residents' level of dependency, which considers mobility, continence and cognitive function, increased steadily over the study period and the proportion of people considered highly dependent rose from 36 percent to 56 percent.

The report is available at <http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/5594>

**Aged & Community Services Australia**  
Level 1, 36 Albert Road, South Melbourne Vic 3205  
Ph: 03 9686 3460  
Email: [info@agedcare.org.au](mailto:info@agedcare.org.au) [www.agedccare.org.au](http://www.agedccare.org.au)