

# *The National Report*

5 March, 2008 – Issue 174



**Aged & Community Services Australia**

## **Contents**

ACFI  
Other 20<sup>th</sup> March Changes  
2<sup>nd</sup> National Community Care Conference: Sydney May 2008.  
Police Checks Toughened for Aged Care Facilities  
ACSA comment  
Australian 2020 Summit  
The Community Care Census 2008  
ACSA Comment  
*ACSA Accreditation Resource Guide 2008.*  
Minister's Dementia Advisory Group Revamp  
ACSA E-Learning Promotion  
National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission.  
More Training Places  
Use of DVA-funded health services  
Housing in Australia  
Dementia News and Research  
New Head for Catholic Health  
Nurses Scholarships  
Ageing Research and News  
ACSA Annual Awards for Excellence

## **ACFI**

With around two weeks to go before the first 'real' ACFI assessments are carried out there is a lot of concern around the aged care industry about what implementation will bring.

The financial impact of the ACFI was a major topic of discussion at last week's ACFI Industry Reference Group and the modelling undertaken around the industry, with ACSA's involvement, has been extremely valuable in highlighting many of the issues to be addressed. Obtaining the correct ACFI score for a resident will require attention to a number of issues. These include the need to apply the ACFI instrument to the resident rather than to their RCS score, and also to complete all of the ACFI checklist items especially those relating to diagnosis. These issues may not have been brought out sufficiently in the TAFE training.

The Department has provided fresh advice on the classification of a resident as high or low care and the basis for this. DoHA has advised ACSA in writing that it is the ACAT (ACAS) assessment that determines this rather than the ACFI score. This will represent a change for many people as previous advice from the Department's legal people had emphasised the RCS score rather than the ACAT classification. The Act hasn't changed but the interpretation of it has.

All parties at the Industry Reference Group acknowledged that vigilance will be needed especially in the early months of ACFI. The Department has commissioned a sophisticated model from Access Economics to assist in identifying and locating the reason for early problems. However this modelling cannot begin until 20,000 ACFIs are in the system, and given that the Department has allowed providers an extra month to submit their first ACFIs, it could take six weeks before it can start.

ACSA is encouraging its members to communicate any ACFI issues through their State Associations and will be in close contact with the Department on these. In addition to financial issues, ACSA would like to receive feedback on any impacts on clients as members get to grips with the ACFI.

The introduction of ACFI is possibly the biggest single change to residential aged care since the 1997 Act was introduced. ACSA will continue to make representations to Government about 'getting it right.' We will be helped in this by receiving feedback from members and will continue to work on ways of assisting members with this change. A set of ACFI 'Questions and Answers' or 'tips' is currently being prepared.

## **Other 20<sup>th</sup> March Changes**

As well as ACFI starting on 20 March, the changes to income assessment, Concessional Resident calculations and the new accommodation payments will also come into place for new residents.

The Department advises that it will send out information kits on all these changes as well as the ACFI on 11<sup>th</sup> March, and that information will also be available on their website.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> National Community Care Conference: Sydney May 2008.**

### **Add 13<sup>th</sup> May to your Conference Travel Plans**

Expand your horizons by inspecting leading edge services prior to the National Community Care Conference in Sydney. You have a choice of two sites to inspect.

### **Centre for Healthy Ageing**

The Centre for Healthy Ageing (CHA) at Bondi Junction (about 30 minutes from Sydney airport) promotes health, fitness and independence for people 60 years or older and live either at home or in self care or low care accommodation.

Members can access therapies and education aimed at staying healthy and improving wellbeing. Exercise packages are developed according to individual needs and these programs are constantly re-evaluated to ensure they remain challenging. Members can also benefit from the advice and assistance of staff which includes exercise physiologists.

A range of different activities including exercise classes, walking groups, weights programs and social outings are organised at CHA.

### **Age Friendly Home**

The Baptist Community Services - NSW & ACT (BCS) Age Friendly Home in Marsfield (about 50 minutes from Sydney airport) is a typical 1970s home and garden that has been totally renovated to demonstrate innovative ageing in place initiatives.

These include physical, environmental, technological and dementia-specific renovations, developed to show older Australians how they can remain in their home independently and safely, for as long as possible.

The home serves as a research and development centre for ageing-in-place initiatives, as well as a training and education source for health professionals.

A dementia-friendly garden has been established, providing a safe, private and secure outdoor area, with sensory plants, wandering paths and a raised garden bed for pottering.

*Both inspections will occur on: Tuesday 13 May 2008 between 12noon – approx. 2.00pm or 2.30pm – approx. 4.30pm, and each costs A\$29.50*

*To reserve a place on either of these site inspections, or to register for the conference, go to <http://www.agedcare.org.au>*

## **Police Checks Toughened for Aged Care Facilities**

The Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot, has moved to toughen the current protocols and protections for nursing home residents as she says they have been found to be inadequate.

Currently only staff with unsupervised access to residents are required to have police checks. Minister Elliot wants the police checks to be extended to all employed staff from accredited aged care facilities – those who have both supervised and unsupervised access.

The toughened police checks would apply to residential aged care, the Community Care Packages and Extended Aged Care at Home Packages.

Minister Elliot has asked the Office of Aged Care Quality and Compliance to write to all of the nation's accredited residential aged care facilities and providers of CACP and EACH packages to inform them of her intention to toughen the guidelines and seek their views. She will also consult with the relevant unions and peak body organisations to address any unforeseen implications of the police checks.

Drafting and consultations will mean the new protocols and guidelines could be in place later this year.

### **ACSA comment**

ACSA will seek clarification as to which staff or contractors will be covered by the Minister's announcement.

The Minister's media release refers explicitly to 'employed staff' which might exclude, for example, visiting trades people, trainers and consultants.

ACSA will seek clarification on this and other critical points.

## Australia 2020 Summit

Most *National Report* readers would now be aware of the Rudd Government's Australia 2020 Summit at Parliament House on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> April designed to help shape a long term strategy for the nation's future.

As shown in earlier initiatives - such as the Myer Foundation's *2020: A Vision for Aged Care in Australia* - discussions on ageing cannot be confined to the 'Health' domain alone. Ageing impacts on education, the workforce, training, demographics, social security, strengthening the community, superannuation, science and innovation.

ACSA CEO, Greg Mundy and President, Klaus Zimmerman have already nominated to attend, and there could – and should - be many more applications from individuals interested in ageing who can participate in these important discussions.

One such welcome nomination has been Kim Jackson, the 35 year old Operations Manager at The Village Baxter, in Frankston South Victoria. Her submission was summarised in a collection of nominations in the Herald Sun newspaper on 3 March.

“The two issues of particular interest to myself are subtopics of “Strengthening communities and supporting working families” and “A long-term national health strategy”, she wrote.

1. How Australia best plans for the future demands on our medical workforce.
2. How we provide practical support to families to combine the tasks of work, raising children and caring for ageing parents...

The two subtopics above need to be considered together.

*National Report* would like to publish the views of other people involved in aged and community care, who nominated for the 2020 Summit, even if they are not selected to attend. Please forward these to [info@agedcare.org.au](mailto:info@agedcare.org.au) with 2020 summit in the subject line.

## The Community Care Census 2008

Community care providers have experienced several significant problems with this project.

The Department of Health & Ageing has been made aware of these and contacted ACSA last week to outline the steps they are taking to address the issues. Late last week they began implementing a series of 'fixes' which should help providers access the system and reduce the difficulties being experienced.

The changes, which include additional server capacity and a system to warn users at the point of log on when there is peak demand on the system, are being implemented during this week and next. The Department will keep users informed of any changes they will see when entering data.

Many participants have also alerted ACSA and State Associations to problems with the Census Helpdesk. The Department believes that these resulted from the initial volume of calls relating to logon and system issues. Additional staff have been employed to take calls and reply to messages left. The Help Desk is currently operating from 8am – 5pm (EST) Monday to Friday. ACSA has asked the Department to consider the extension of these hours to accommodate providers in Western Australia.

The Department has now written to all participants regarding the difficulties being experienced with the Community Care Census 2008:

“Since the Census commenced on 1 February there has been an excellent response by service outlets, with over 1100 completed serve outlet forms submitted to date. There has also been a steady increase in the number of outlets compiling client data forms, with more than 1000 currently in train.

However, as the volume of client data forms has grown we have experienced a number of IT failures causing server overloads. These have at times prevented outlet staff from accessing the website, or have resulted in disrupted active sessions. This in turn gave rise to a greater than expected volume of calls to the helpdesk and emails to the Census Team. This caused significant delays in our response times to queries. We have allocated additional staff to the helpdesk function and response times have improved.

The Department apologises for the impact this has had on census participants. We appreciate the patience displayed by the many users who sought assistance during this period. The Department is working with our service supplier, IBM, to improve the operation of the system. Some changes have been implemented and further improvements, including the provision of an additional server, will take place this week. We will keep you informed of changes that will affect users.

In the meantime, we are still working towards a last census week of 17-20 March, with a due date for last submissions of 4 April. However, we are aware that some organisations may have trouble meeting this timeline. Therefore, we will continue to monitor the impact of system changes and by the end of the week we will review the deadline for data entry.

If you have any other queries about the Census please contact the helpdesk on 1800 265 860.”

### **ACSA Comment**

ACSA appreciates the Department’s apology but will also take up the issues of the resources required to complete the census including, for example, the requirement to supply data already held by the Department.

## **ACSA Accreditation Resource Guide 2008.**

ACSA has developed an *Accreditation Resource Guide* to assist providers to meet the Accreditation requirements for announced and unannounced visits. The Guide addresses the Accreditation Agency’s Expected Outcomes through 12 Accreditation Modules, suggesting strategies and documentation to assist you to present your facility at its best.

This invaluable tool provides guidance on:

- Accreditation Audit and Appeals timelines and procedures
- Practical suggestions for preparing in advance for unannounced visits

- Practical tips to assist management and staff on Audit Day
- Your rights and responsibilities.

The Guide is presented as a manual which walks you and your staff through a step-by-step approach to assessment requirements and is also a valuable training tool to alert new staff to the rigours of Aged Care Accreditation.

It is available FREE to ACSA members from the Members Only section on our website <http://www.agedcare.org.au/> or as a hard copy for \$11 (includes postage, handling and GST) – Order form on our website under “Hot Topics”. The price for non-members is \$88. For hard copies contact ACSA on 03 96863460.

## Minister's Dementia Advisory Group Revamp

ACSA CEO Greg Mundy is one of the new members on the new 16-member Ministerial Dementia Advisory Group.

Author and dementia carer advocate Ms Sue Pieters-Hawke is to join former Brisbane Lord Mayor Ms Sallyanne Atkinson as a co-chair of the group. The other members are:

- Professor Henry Brodaty AO MB BS FRACP FRANZCP – Professor of Psychogeriatrics, University of New South Wales; Director, Aged Care Psychiatry and Head of the Memory Disorders Clinic, Prince of Wales Hospital
- Dr Mark Yates MBBS FRACP – Geriatrician and Clinical Director Aged Care and Rehabilitation Medicine, Ballarat Health Services
- Mr Glenn Rees – National Executive Director, Alzheimer's Australia
- Ms Sharon Davis – Northern Regional Manager, Uniting Church Australian Frontier Services
- Professor Jennifer Abbey – Professor of School of Nursing (Aged Care), Queensland University of Technology; Director, Queensland Dementia Collaborative Research Centre
- Mr Stephen Judd – Chief Executive, Hammond Care Group
- Ms Shirley Garnett – WA Dementia Consumer Advisory Group; Alzheimer's Australia National Consumer Committee; Vice President, Dementia Advocacy Support Network International
- Ms Kaye Pritchard – Carer and former President of Alzheimer's Australia (ACT)
- Ms Jakalina Pritchard – Cultural Liaison Coordinator, Royal District Nursing Service (VIC)
- Ms Lily Muthurajah – Aged Care Assessment and Liaison Unit, ACT Community Health
- Mr Scott Wilson – Director, Aboriginal and Alcohol Council (SA)
- Ms Joan Hughes – Chief Executive Officer, Carers Australia
- Ms Wendy Venn – Aged Care Nurse Practitioner, Aged Care and Rehabilitation Service, ACT Health

The first meeting of the Minister's Dementia Advisory Group was held in the northern NSW town of Kingscliff – in the Minister's electorate - on 3 March.

## ACSA E-Learning Promotion

ACSA is running an e-learning promotion of 20% off on certain recruitment courses. The promotion runs from now until the end of April. An information flyer is attached to this edition of National Report.

The courses covered are:

- Recruitment and Selection
- EEO Best Practice Recruitment Guidelines
- Effective Reference Checking
- Develop Business Strategies to Source and Assess Candidates\*
- Manage the Recruitment Process for Client Organisations\*

\* Courses can be credited to the Certificate IV in Business (Employment Services)

## National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission.

The Government has established a National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission to provide an interim report on a long-term health reform plan to the Commonwealth Government by the end of 2008, a final plan in mid 2009, and assist on key aspects of the framework for the next health care agreements between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories.

The Commission will focus on health financing, maximising a productive relationship between public and private sectors, and improving rural health.

Dr Christine Bennett will chair the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission. Dr Bennett has worked extensively in health care as a clinician and administrator across both the public and private sectors. She is currently Chief Medical Officer at MBF Australia Ltd.

Nine other Commissioners will assist Dr Bennett on the Commission:

*Rob Knowles*, former Victorian Liberal Health Minister; *Geoff Gallop*, former Premier of Western Australia; *Mukesh Haikerwal*, Melbourne GP and immediate past-President of the AMA; *Stephen Duckett*, health economist and former Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Health; *Ron Penny*, Emeritus Professor of Medicine, University of NSW; *Sabina Knight*, Senior Lecturer, Centre for Remote Health and remote area nurse; *Sharon Willcox*, Director of consulting firm Health Policy Solutions; *Justin Beilby*, Executive Dean of the University of Adelaide's Medical School; and *Mary Ann O'Loughlin*, Director, The Allen Consulting Group.

ACSA will work to see that aged and community care issues are considered as part of this reform process. Several of the Commissioners have had involvement in ageing issues, including Rob Knowles as a Victorian Minister for Aged Care (and Housing), and Mukesh Haikerwal when at the AMA was a well-regarded member of the National Aged Care Alliance, while Mary Ann O'Loughlin directed the preparation of the Future of Community Care Report for the Community Care Coalition which ACSA convenes.

## More Training Places

The Australian Government has launched the Productivity Places Program to fund 20,000 new skills training places from 1 April 2008. These new skilled training places aim to enable workers with improved skills to enter the workforce as early as June 2008.

The 20,000 skilled training places will focus on areas of acute skills shortage in the Australian workforce and include health and community services - child care worker, special care worker, personal care and nursing assistants.

The Productivity Places Program is described as the first step in the Government's election commitment to provide an additional 450,000 training places over the next four years to ensure that Australians develop the skills that industry needs.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is seeking submissions from RTOs wishing to offer approved qualifications under the Productivity Places Program.

Submissions can be made from 7 March 2008. For further information go to:

<http://www.dest.gov.au/productivityplaces>

## Use of DVA-funded health services

A new AIHW report *Veterans' Use of Health Services* examines the patterns of use of DVA-funded health services by the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) gold cardholders.

Comparisons in health service use are made between gold cardholders living in permanent residential aged care and gold cardholders of the same age and sex living in the community.

The health services examined are general practitioner, including local medical officer consultations; medical specialist consultations; pharmaceutical use under the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS); and hospital use.

The largest difference in health service use between gold cardholders living in the community and those living in residential aged care occurs in the usage of medical specialists. More than three-quarters of gold cardholders living in the community consulted a specialist in 2003-04 compared with less than half of gold cardholders living in residential aged care.

Hospital use and time spent in hospitals did not change markedly with age for gold cardholders living in residential aged care.

A move into residential aged care during the year was associated with high health service usage among gold cardholders. Hospital episodes for gold cardholders who moved into residential aged care during the year were nearly three times longer than hospital episodes for gold cardholders who did not enter residential aged care.

## Housing in Australia

The cost of housing and a shortfall in housing supply are creating housing stress for many Australians with over a million and a half households being helped by Government housing assistance programs, according to a new AIHW Report.

Despite Australia's current period of economic prosperity, and the fact that the majority of Australians have suitable housing, homelessness continues to be a major social problem that, on a given night, affects more than 100,000 Australians, many of them older Australians.

## Dementia News and Research

An independent survey commissioned by Alzheimer's Australia suggests that:

- 75 % of Australians would take a test if one were available to reveal if they are going to develop Alzheimer's or another form of dementia. On average, people would like to know by the age of 41 if they will develop Alzheimer's or another form of dementia and women are more likely than men to want to be informed
- By contrast, the majority of Australians in their 50s and 60s are doing little to prepare for later life. Almost two thirds of Australians between 51 and 60 years of age have not discussed their future care arrangements with family or friends and almost one in five of all Australians in the same age group, do not have any legal or financial planning arrangements in place for later in life.
- 90% of Australians believe something can be done to reduce their risk of dementia but are confused about how. Only 41% were able to correctly identify reducing high blood pressure as a possible preventative measure and high cholesterol was recognised as a leading risk factor by just 35% of Australians. Both high blood pressure and high cholesterol are risk factors for heart disease which has strong links to the development of Alzheimer's or another form of dementia.

The independent survey was conducted by Stollznaw Research in October 2007 and based on responses from 1,380 Australians.

The full report is at [www.healthreport.com.au](http://www.healthreport.com.au)

## New Head for Catholic Health

Mr Martin Laverty has been appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Health, replacing Francis Sullivan who moved to the AMA.

He has a Master in Laws, and is a policy advocate with many years national and international experience in public health, disability and social policy. He is also an active community volunteer, an experienced company director and Board chairman and practising Catholic.

Among the many organisations he has worked for or provided counsel to are the NSW Muscular Dystrophy Association, The Australian Red Cross, Medical Industry Association of Australia, CSL, Canteen, The Smith Family and the Government of Abu Dhabi.

He officially takes up the post on 5 May 2008 and Richard Gray will continue as Acting CEO until that time.

## Nurses Scholarships

Eligible nurses and midwives are invited to apply for the National Nurse Re-entry Scholarship Scheme and the Continuing Professional Education Scholarship Scheme for Rural and Remote Nurses.

The government schemes, which are administered by Royal College of Nursing, Australia (RCNA), will provide hundreds of scholarships each year for nurses and midwives in specific areas of practice.

The National Nurse Re-entry Scheme, with scholarships valued at up to \$6000 each, is available for both Registered/Division 1 nurses and midwives and Enrolled/Division 2 nurses whose registration has lapsed and who have not practiced for five years or more. Applicants must previously have been registered by a nurse registration body in an Australian State or Territory.

The Continuing Professional Education Scheme for Rural and Remote Nurses is available to both Registered/Division 1 nurses and midwives and Enrolled/Division 2 nurses undertaking Continuing Professional Education courses and attending conferences held within Australia. These scholarships are worth up to \$10000 each. Recently re-entered nurses are encouraged to apply under this scheme to further their education and professional development.

Both schemes open on 1 March 2008 and close on 25 April 2008. For more information please visit the RCNA website at <http://www.rcna.org.au>

## Ageing Research and News

- **The Dynamics of Residential Aged Care in Australia: 8-year trends in admission, separations and dependency**

Dr Anna Howe co-authored this paper which was published in the *Australian Health Review* in November 2007. It analyses changes in dependency of residents in residential aged care homes consequent upon the passing of the Commonwealth Aged Care Act in late 1997.

The findings show that the proportion of admissions classified at higher categories of the Resident Classification Scale has increased over time, and that the trend to higher classification is even more pronounced by the time residents separate.

As funding of residential aged care is based on resident dependency, change in dependency and in the dynamics of the aged care system have potentially significant consequences for Commonwealth funding of providers to ensure care can be provided commensurate with resident needs.

The conclusions take up a number of implications of the findings for future policy in relation to planning and funding of residential aged care.

The use of the population aged 70 years and over as the basis for planning no longer accords well with the population from which admissions are drawn and continuing changes in mortality and disability at older ages.

Secondly, the balance of low and high care places adopted in planning is increasingly out of kilter with the diminishing share of admissions and separations accounted for by low care homes. Many of those admitted to residential care at any level have not previously been using any community care services or respite care, and the potential for further reductions in demand indicated by such findings is likely to be greatest at lower rather than higher levels of dependency.

## Transition care: will it deliver?

Professor Len C Gray, author of the Two Year Review of Residential Aged Care, has joined with several others to write a 'Viewpoint' in the recent *Medical Journal of Australia* (MJA 2008; 188 (4): 251-253 on Transition Care.

It explains that *Transition care* is a new program to Australia that is designed to facilitate transitions of frail older people between the hospital and aged care systems.

This program is designed to deliver potentially important improvements to the Australian health care system - and the authors ask- will it deliver?

They say that the current evidence base regarding the efficacy of this type of program is mixed, and there is little evidence to indicate improved patient outcomes.

An average transition care episode is expensive (about \$11,000). Therefore, careful consideration of the relative cost-effectiveness compared with other interface programs such as inpatient subacute services is essential.

Transition care services should be established within the context of overall regional plans for aged care, incorporating hospital acute and subacute inpatient services, and long-term community and residential care programs.

[http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/188\\_04\\_180208/gra10922\\_fm.html](http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/188_04_180208/gra10922_fm.html)

## ACSA Annual Awards for Excellence

Every year ACSA presents awards in order to promote and recognise excellence in a range of areas that contribute to the quality of life of older people, people with disabilities and/or their carers.

The Awards also acknowledge efforts to increase public confidence and community involvement in aged and community services. Nominations close on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

Winners will be announced at the ACSA National Conference to be held at the Adelaide Convention Centre 28<sup>th</sup> September-1<sup>st</sup> October 2008.

Any queries regarding the Awards should be directed to Heather Stevens at the ACS office on phone (03) 9686 3460 or by emailing [hstevens@agedcare.org.au](mailto:hstevens@agedcare.org.au). Award nomination information is attached and can be downloaded from ACSA's website [www.agedcare.org.au/ACSA\\_Awards/ACSA\\_awards.htm](http://www.agedcare.org.au/ACSA_Awards/ACSA_awards.htm)

Aged & Community Services Australia  
Level 1, 36 Albert Road, South Melbourne, Vic, 3205  
Ph: 03 9686 3460 Fax: 03 9686 3453  
Email: [info@agedcare.org.au](mailto:info@agedcare.org.au) Website: [www.agedcare.org.au](http://www.agedcare.org.au)