

The National Report

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Aged & Community Services Australia

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Survey About the National Report

ACSA is keen to receive reader feedback on the current format and contents of National Report, and ways it could be improved.

Please take five minutes to complete the attached survey - nine simple questions about what you think of the contents, the length and other characteristics of National Report, whether it meets your information needs, and if you would be interested in a separate new e-publication covering new research and publications of interest to aged and community care services, providers and staff.

Once completed, please email to llovell@agedcare.org.au or fax it back on 03 9686 3453.

Aged Care at the 2020 Summit

There is a sprinkling of aged care expertise among the 1,000 participants at the Prime Minister's Australia 2020 Summit.

They include Allan Pidgeon, CEO of Aged Care Queensland, Mike Rungie, CEO of ACH in SA, Dr Anna Howe, gerontologist and former head of the Office of Aged Care, Professor Hal Kendig from the University of Sydney, Dr Kaarin Anstey from the ANU and Dr Catherine Yelland, a Qld geriatrician. Dr Mukesh Haikerwal from the AMA has also had a long standing interest in ageing issues.

“I look forward to attending the 2020 Summit in Canberra later this month, and shall be seeking to ensure that there is a focus on the challenges resulting from our ageing population,” Allan Pidgeon says.

“Summit participants have been asked to canvass opinion widely and then submit 100 word responses to two questions: “*If you could do one thing in your “Discussion Stream”* [ie ‘a long-term national health strategy’], *what would it be? What is it that you think would make the most difference?*”

“I have a particular issue in mind, but would welcome suggestions; so please email me on allanp@acqi.org.au if you’d like to pass on your thoughts.”

Mike Rungie wrote in his submission that “A future Australia must have high expectations of all of its citizens, particularly its older citizens – an expectation that older people can be productive and contributing members of society.”

“This requires a new vision of ageing that includes good health and good opportunities. This can be achieved by older people owning their own futures, by businesses and community creating opportunities for older people, and by Governments fostering the vision.”

“As CEO of an aged care organisation that cares for more than 35,000 older Australians each year, I believe the Australia 2020 Summit is an opportunity to create this new vision”.

Submissions of up to 500 words per topic can be made to the Summit via www.australia2020.gov.au until 9 April.

National Community Care Conference Sydney 14-16 May

ACSA’s second national community care conference has a host of influential, informative and inspiring speakers who make this a ‘must go’ event - even before you consider the conference setting (Sydney harbourside), the pre conference workshops and inspections, and the variety and depth of concurrent sessions.

David Challis, Professor of Community Care Research at the University of Manchester, is the keynote international and will talk about different models and approaches to assessment, drawing on his knowledge and experience advising on both the Australian and British systems, as well as in many other countries.

Shereen Moloney, who is Senior Manager, Health of Older People, Planning and Funding Directorate, Capital and Coast District Health Board in New Zealand, will describe a ‘root and branch’ change she is still working on which those who heard her speak at the national HACC conference earlier this year know, will provide lessons for Australia from ‘across the ditch.’

Ian Hardy, CEO of Helping Hand in South Australia, winner of many awards for excellence and distinguished representative on many aged and community care advisory and policy enquiries and associations, will look at organisational culture and innovation, with a focus on mental health.

They are just the keynotes from the first morning of conference where the emphasis is on innovation and independence! There are many others, some of whom will also be profiled in the next National Report. They will focus on community care reform, the workforce, enhancing independence, perceptions of community care, and social and political perspectives.

Urgent- reserve your place

Pre Conference tours and workshops are filling fast, so if you plan on attending any of them, and also to ensure you get your choice of concurrent sessions, register now.

For more details and registration, go to www.agedcare.org.au.

ACSA National Awards for Excellence

Applications for the premier industry Awards for Excellence, offered by ACSA, are now open, with categories, selection criteria and lodgement details available on the ACSA website www.agedcare.org.au.

Nominations close on 6 June so start detailing your 'star' performers, staff and services now, to ensure they are considered for the ultimate industry accolade – acclaim from industry peers.

Still Time to Complete 'What Do You See in Aged Care?' Online Survey

It's not too late to complete the *ACSA and McGregor Tan Research* survey into people's perceptions of the aged care industry, including community care, retirement living, and residential care.

Although the 31 March deadline has passed, the surveys will remain online until close of business on Monday 7 April.

The focus of the three on-line questionnaires is asking people for their views about aged care and exploring the reasons why they hold them. The three questionnaires, for aged care providers, employees and consumers, are available at www.agedcare.org.au together with other information about this project.

Make sure your views are heard!

If you fit one of the three categories, please log on and register your response.

<http://www2.mcgregor.com.au/8352eACSAemployees/8352eACSAemployees.htm>

<http://www2.mcgregor.com.au/8352cACSAconsumers/8352cACSAconsumers.htm>

<http://www2.mcgregor.com.au/8352pACSAproviders/8352pACSAproviders.htm>

Dodgy Data on Complaints

Like everyone else in the industry, ACSA has been concerned by media stories, over the Easter weekend, reporting misleading data from the new aged care complaints investigation scheme (CIS).

The new system counts its data differently (the main reason for the difference in figures between last year and this) as noted in this year's Report on Government Service Provision.

ACSA has already written to The Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot, expressing concern about the manner and timing of the release of this data. The ACSA letter also stressed that the unfortunate result is further unwarranted undermining of public perception of the industry and angst amongst the thousands of people who diligently take care of our elderly.

Minister Elliot cited this data to justify ‘a range of tough measures to improve quality to protect frail and aged Australians’.

From next financial year, the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency has been instructed to undertake a record 7000 visits (up from 4000) to aged care facilities across the nation.

This is on top of other measures announced earlier regarding expanding the requirement for staff to undergo police checks; strengthening other powers of the Accreditation Agency; requiring clinical staff to check on actual residents in a facility as a part of their investigations; and reviewing the Aged Care Act to close loopholes and/or make improvements to quality in aged care.

Government Low Interest Loans for Aged Care Beds

Minister Elliot has announced details of the Government’s election pledge to provide zero real interest rate loans to encourage aged care bed development in areas of need.

Eligibility criteria for the providers will include a good past record as an existing provider; a sound record of developing new services in a timely manner; sound financial viability; willingness to provide aged care services in the identified areas of high need and address any additional identified care needs; and the ability to access a suitable site.

State and territory (and local) government entities will be permitted to apply for the loans as in some small regional centres and rural and remote areas they are the only operators.

The loans are over 12 years and will target parts of Queensland, the Northern Territory, New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia. All of the Northern Territory (with special attention to Aboriginal needs) and Tasmania are targeted.

The Department will not advertise set numbers of places in particular areas. Providers will be able to apply for both high and low care residential places and for community care places as part of an overall application to set up services in targeted locations.

Applications will open in early April and forms will be available from the Department of Health and Ageing and on the website. ACSA has sought some greater clarity from the Department to avoid members spending time on applications that don’t stand a chance.

ACSA has welcomed the Government’s confirmation of the \$300 million low interest loan scheme and said it should help to improve access to residential aged care. However it would not meet the industry’s overall capital care needs.

ACSA CEO Greg Mundy said that providing low interest finance is a new measure but the amount involved, up to \$300 million over 4 years, is small compared with the overall capital requirements of aged care estimated by PricewaterhouseCoopers last year to require an additional \$5.7 billion between now and 2020. Nonetheless it is important to test new approaches and ones designed to meet the needs of disadvantaged communities.

“For the first time in recent memory last years allocation of new aged care beds was undersubscribed in two States, Western Australia and Tasmania. This is a measure of just how tight the economics of aged care are” he said.

Enquiry Into Appropriate Care For People With Significant Psycho-Geriatric Illness In Residential Aged Care.

Minister Elliot has asked the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Health and Ageing, Ms Mary Murnane, to consult with experts and providers of psycho-geriatric care and report on Residential Aged Care and People with Psycho-Geriatric disorders by mid-May.

Currently more than 75 per cent of people living in aged care homes have some form of dementia or some other form of cognitive impairment. A small minority can behave aggressively or inappropriately towards other residents or staff.

The Minister said there had been a number of recent incidents that raised the appropriate care for people with significant psycho-geriatric illness, including a death on February 28 at the South Australian state run facility Makk & McLeay Nursing Home in Adelaide which cares for residents with dementia and some with other ageing diseases and psychiatric disorders. Another resident – who is 85 years old – has been charged with murder.

Medicare Australia ACFI update

If you are planning on using the web based channel to submit your ACFI data online to Medicare Australia, you will need to register by completing the ACFI authorisation form.

On receipt of the completed registration form Medicare Australia will issue you with your User ID and password.

This form and information about ACFI can be found on the Medicare Australia website www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/aged.

ACFI Help and Advice

ACSA and ACAA have developed some materials to assist aged care providers with the introduction of ACFI. These are on ACSA's website www.agedcare.org.au.

Not to be Confused with ...

ACSA has discovered two other ACSAs: The Aged Care Services Australia Group is a privately owned aged care company headquartered in Victoria with residential care facilities in Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales. There is also another completely separate Aged Care Services Australia Pty Ltd, registered in Western Australia.

Neither has any connection with the industry peak body that produces this National Report.

Not-for-Profit Community Organisations' Experience in Working with the Corporate Sector Survey

The Centre for Corporate Public Affairs has been commissioned by the Department of Housing, Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to undertake a major study into Australian not-for-profit (NFP) community organisations and corporate community investment.

The purpose is to better understand how to facilitate better corporate engagement with NFP organisations and optimise the contribution of business to NFP work. It follows a report the Centre completed in 2007, entitled 'Corporate Community Investment in Australia' which included input from 110 companies via online survey, workshops and submission of materials. This report is available as a free download at www.accpa.com.au

The Centre would like input from NFP organisations in determining the key issues, success factors and future challenges that exist in working with business. To ensure the research includes as broad a cross-section of the NFP sector as possible, the Centre is inviting NFP organisations to participate in an online survey.

The study will be completed by mid-2008 and hard copies of the report will be distributed to all participants.

The survey can be accessed and completed at <http://live.everyonecounts.com.au/app/367/363>

Other News

COAG to Deliver up to 50,000 More Frontline Health Workers

The Rudd Government will invest in up to 50,000 additional health vocational training places to tackle the current health workforce crisis, which includes aged care.

Skills Australia will report to COAG in July 2008 on a method for allocating these priority places following consultation with the COAG Health and Productivity working groups and ministerial councils.

These training places will be online from 1 January 2009.

Education Crisis Threatens Federal Plans to Tackle Nursing Shortage

Federal government plans for extra nursing places in universities could be thwarted by ageing infrastructure, a lack of clinical placements and a shortage of educators, nursing education leaders have warned.

The Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia and New Zealand) is the peak nursing organisation representing the nation's 37 Schools of Nursing. It has warned many schools could not cope with 1500 extra nursing students in the short term because of a crisis in the availability of clinical placements for nursing students.

The Council welcomed the Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard's review of higher education and the extra places in universities, but said that additional funding was needed to ensure extra nursing students would get a high quality education.

Health Care Agreements More Than Hospital Care

The Australian Health Care Reform Alliance (AHCRA) has said the Australian Health Care Agreements need to go beyond hospital care.

"The fragmentation and cost shifting that has plagued our system must be replaced with a funding process that allows for more effective integration of services and a focus on illness prevention, health promotion and primary health care," AHCRA Chair, Fiona Armstrong, said.

The Alliance of more than 40 national key health care stakeholders said the funding agreement process should broaden the agreements beyond hospitals to include out-of-hospital services; improve accountability by focussing on health outcomes, develop indicators for measuring the contributions of things such as workforce, staffing, and skills mix, as well as cost benefit analyses of all health services at both provider and institutional level.

“It is time for a health system designed around health needs; not one in which the services delivered are dictated by the funding system.”

Pay Doctor Scheme Extends to Specialists

A scheme allowing GPs to recover unpaid Medicare cheques automatically is to be extended to specialists under legislation introduced to Parliament last week.

Health Minister, Nicola Roxon, said the measure would encourage specialists and consultant physicians to use electronic claiming of Medicare benefits. It would also help patients, who wouldn't have to go to a Medicare office to claim their pay doctor cheques. The measure amends the 90 Day Pay Doctor Scheme.

Ms Roxon said that when a patient submits an unpaid bill to Medicare, the patient is given a pay doctor cheque - made out to the doctor who provided the service for the amount of the Medicare rebate. The patient was responsible for sending the cheque, plus any extra money needed to pay the account fully, to the doctor. Ms Roxon said most patients sent the cheques on to their doctor. However some cheques were presented very late or not at all, leading to lengthy delays or bad debts which were costly for practices to chase up.

The 90-day scheme, now open only to GPs, allows Medicare to cancel a pay doctor cheque if it hasn't been banked in 90 days and make a direct electronic payment to the doctor. Ms Roxon said specialist use of pay doctor cheques was declining. "Allowing these practitioners access to the scheme will encourage more specialists to accept payment through the use of the facility as it provides assurance that they will receive some payment for services rendered," she said.

Privacy Guidelines for Health Service Providers

The Australian Privacy Commissioner, Karen Curtis, has issued new privacy guidance materials for medical practitioners and other health service provider and the public, following an extensive consultation process.

They offer health care professionals and members of the public greater clarity about whether particular practices are permitted under the Privacy Action.

The guidance materials consist of five information sheets for healthcare in Australian private sector, and seven FAQs for members of the public. The information sheets address the following: fees for patients to access their records; use and disclosure of health information for managing a health service; sharing health information within a treating team; sharing health information with relatives of an incapacitated patient and denial of access to health information due to serious threat to life or health.

To obtain copies of the information sheets and FAQs please visit <http://www.privacy.gov.au/publications/index.html#I>.

Reports, Research and Publications

Rural, Regional & Remote: Indicators of Health Status and Determinants of Health

The Australian Institute of Health & Welfare has released the report Rural, Regional & Remote: Indicators of Health Status and Determinants of Health.

This report focuses on a comprehensive range of health issues concerning people living in rural, regional and remote Australia. It includes information relating to health status (such as rates of chronic disease, injury and mental health) and determinants of health (such as tobacco smoking, alcohol consumption, nutrition and physical activity).

The publication can be downloaded from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/phe/rrrh-ihsdh/rrrh-ihsdh.pdf>

The Impact of Home Maintenance and Modification Services on Health, Community Care And Housing Outcomes in Later Life

This Positioning Paper from the Australian Housing & Urban Research Institute (AHURI) provides an analytical framework and research foundation for understanding the impact of home maintenance and modification (HMM) services on health, community care and housing outcomes in later life, and for developing more effective public policies relating to provision of these services.

The project is predicated on a concern that the potential of HMM services is yet to be realised and that this is an under-researched area of policy and service provision. The first two stages of the study, reported in this paper, include an international literature review and a review of the Australian service system.

The Positioning Paper also includes a review of the Australian ageing policy context. Based on these reviews, the Positioning Paper presents an analytical framework for research and policy development relating to HMM services in Australia, summarised in Figure 1. The remainder of the project includes two studies, the first a more critical analysis of the service system and its links to ageing policy, the second a qualitative study of the experiences of consumers of HMM services.

<http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/search.asp?ShowSearch=False&Search=Properties&Keywords=&Year=&Centre=&Search-Title=&Search-Summary=&Search-Author=&PublicationType=pp&Sort=Search-Title&Direction=ASC#results>

Tasmanian Dementia Patients More Drugged than in Other States

Researchers at the University of Tasmania are working on a project to reduce the use of tranquilisers and antipsychotics in the state's nursing homes.

Preliminary studies by the School of Pharmacy have found the use of benzodiazepines to control the behaviour of patients with dementia is the highest in the country. Professor Gregory Peterson is leading the \$200,000 project, funded by the Department of Health and Ageing. He says benzodiazepine and antipsychotic drugs are a risky form of therapy for elderly people with dementia and Alzheimer's.

"In the older patient there's a risk of drops in blood pressure and faintness and falls and therefore the risk of hip fracture is one of the major sorts of epidemiological risk factors that's been associated with these drugs. There are a number of factors involved, probably related to staffing within nursing homes and perhaps even residents' relatives expectations," he said.

"So that there's a whole multi-factorial issue that's certainly not just something that we can blame GPs for, for instance." Professor Peterson says his researchers will collaborate with the medical profession in developing joint strategies to tackle the problem.

WA Volunteers Wanted for Vitamin D – Old Age Memory Study

There is increasing evidence that the onset of dementia can be delayed with targeting potentially modifiable protective factors such as vitamin D. Vitamin D is important for healthy bones and muscle function, but is now also discussed as being important for healthy brain function.

With the support of the NH&MRC Dementia Research Grant Scheme, the WA Centre for Health & Ageing (WACHA) is currently conducting a randomised placebo-controlled clinical trial to investigate whether supplementation with vitamin D can help to reduce cognitive decline. The trial is called VITA-D. Currently older adults, 65 years or older, who feel they have mild problems with their memory, but have not been diagnosed with dementia, are invited to participate in the trial.

The hypothesis is that vitamin D supplementation might prove to be a simple, effective and inexpensive way of delaying cognitive decline in old age.

This study commenced in 2007 and to date, has screened over 500 interested participants for eligibility. Many more participants are required

Older adults who may be interested in participating are welcome to call (08) 9224 2855 or check at <http://www.wacha.org.au>.

Residential Aged Care Coronial Communiqué

The *Residential Aged Care Coronial Communiqué* highlights selected cases that have been reported to the State Coroner's Office and are of interest to the aged care community. The aims of the Communiqué are:

- To improve the awareness of clinicians, health workers, carers and those in positions of governance about adverse events resulting from systems failures. Lessons from past cases can then be applied to their own institutions.
- To improve residential aged care workers' understanding of the coronial system and the work performed by the Clinical Liaison Service.

The latest edition of the Residential Aged Care Coronial Communiqué (February 2008) which explores the challenges of the interfaces between aged care facilities and families, hospitals, general practitioners and emergency departments is now available:

The Communiqué will be produced quarterly and distributed electronically to subscribers. Contact racc@vifm.org and request to be added to the Residential Aged Care Coronial Communiqué list.

Hopes Rise For Alzheimer's Cure

Australian scientists believe they are a step closer to curing Alzheimer's, with a new drug that may even stop or reverse the effects of the degenerative disease. Data from the clinical trial presented to a women's mental health conference in Melbourne shows the medication can reduce levels of a brain protein called amyloid, which is notoriously linked to the condition.

The protein behaves strangely in Alzheimer's sufferers, dividing irregularly and creating a form called beta amyloid that builds up in sticky toxic clumps in the brain, killing off neurons. Why the protein does this is unknown but a team of Melbourne researchers have developed a drug that has been found to stop the process in rats and a small group of sufferers.

The drug is being developed by the Australian pharmaceutical company, Prana Biotechnology Limited, which worked jointly on its discovery with the [Mental Health Research Institute of Victoria](#). Larger scale trials involving hundreds of Australians are expected to get underway later this year, with the drug available generally as early as 2011 if found to be effective.

2008 National Housing Conference

Papers and presentations from this Conference held in Sydney in February can be downloaded. They include a session on ageing in place.

http://www.nationalhousingconference.org.au/browse.asp?ContainerID=program_2008-

Dementia Care Conference 2008

This Conference was held 21-22 February 2008 in Tasmania. Presentations from the Conference are available for download from Alzheimer's Australia's website.

<http://www.alzheimers.org.au/content.cfm?infopageid=4300&CFID=119700&CFTOKEN=40358307>

Technology the Key to Australia's Health Challenges

Telstra has unveiled a display of futuristic medical technology as part of a new business health initiative it says will be critical in helping Australia cope with future demands on the health system.

A new wireless version of the traditional doctors' stethoscope and intelligent remote monitoring systems designed to help treat and support people out of hospitals and nursing homes are among the hi-tech equipment going on show in Australia for the first time at the Telstra Experience Centre in Sydney.

Telstra said greater use of smart networked health technology was the key to meeting the challenges faced by an ageing population and greater demand for scarce resources. Launching Telstra's new Business Health Solutions, Telstra said they were committed to ensure Australia was at the forefront in bringing cost-efficient medical solutions closer to the patient.

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Reports on Cost of Living Pressures on Older People.

The Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs has released *A decent quality of life*, which reports on cost of living pressures on older people.

Its says that the distribution of wealth amongst many older Australians is unbalanced and that “For a significant minority, cost of living pressures are placing them in increasing financial stress and they do not enjoy a decent quality of life.”

Older people with severe disabilities or chronic illnesses and those in residential aged care are also particularly sensitive to cost of living pressures.

The committee has made a number of recommendations which aim to alleviate the current pressures experienced by older Australians on low incomes. These include a review of the Age Pension base level and indexation arrangements, a review of financial thresholds to access government services, benefits and concessions, the introduction of measures to improve access to dental care and changes to residential care fee structures.

The committee has also proposed a series of recommendations designed to meet the future challenges that an ageing population will present. ACSA made a submission to this Inquiry and CEO Greg Mundy appeared before the Committee last year.

http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/clac_ctte/older_austs_living_cost

Denture Cleansers Can Cause Allergic Reactions

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says it has received at least 73 reports of adverse reactions, including at least one death, related to the use of denture cleansers.

Problems have occurred with both proper and improper use of these products, the agency said.

The FDA is asking manufacturers of denture cleansers to include a warning in the label about persulfates, which are known to cause allergic reactions in some people.

Persulfates are used in most denture cleansers as part of the cleaning and bleaching process. The agency is also recommending that manufacturers consider appropriate alternatives to persulfates.

An allergic reaction to persulfates may not occur after the first use or even until after many years of use, the federal agency said. Symptoms of an allergic reaction may not appear for several minutes or even hours after actual use. Symptoms may include irritation, tissue damage, rash, hives, gum tenderness, breathing problems, and low blood pressure.

Other reactions may be due to misuse of denture cleansers, the FDA reported. For example, some cleansers may list mouthwash as an ingredient, but consumers should never chew, swallow, or gargle with denture cleansers.

To reduce misuse of denture cleansers, the FDA is recommending that manufacturers improve the directions on the label. Labelling revisions are needed to make it clear that these products are meant to clean dentures in a container, not while still in the mouth.

Some patients have gargled or swallowed denture cleansers, resulting in abdominal pain, vomiting, seizures, breathing problems, and low blood pressure. Dentures should be thoroughly rinsed with water before they are placed in the mouth, according to an FDA reminder.

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2008 National Report Survey

National Report is seeking feedback from readers to help us meet your information needs.

- 1. Do you find the National Report gives you the information you require?**
 Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

- 2. If not, what sorts of information would you like to see included?**

- 3. Would you like more or less detailed information?**
 More detailed Same Less detailed

- 4. Do you on-send the National Report to colleagues?**
 Usually Sometimes Never

- 5. Do you rely on the information that is included?**
 Usually Sometimes Rarely

- 6. Is the National Report timely in giving you the required information?**
 Usually Sometimes Never

- 7. Would you be interested in an additional monthly report on research and publications of interest and relevance to aged and community care services, providers and staff rather than having this material in the regular National Report?** Yes No

- 8. National Report aims to be about 10 pages long. Do you find this:**
 Too long About right Too short

- 9. Do you have any other comments about ACSA's National Report?**

Are you an: Aged Care Provider Government Official Political Official
 Supplier to the Industry Other

