

The National Report

**5 June, 2008 – Issue 181
Aged & Community Services Australia**



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Do you know a Star?

If so, why haven't you nominated them yet for the ACSA Awards?

We know some of you have been really busy this year, especially with the introduction of ACFI, so have not had time to submit a nomination for the ACSA Awards.

We would like to enthusiastically encourage all our members * to participate in these Awards. Our closing date has been extended in the hope that this will give you the opportunity to take part.

Award Categories:

- ◆ Employee
- ◆ Volunteer
- ◆ Organisation – Residential Care
 - Community Care
 - Retirement Living
- ◆ Training Innovation
- ◆ Technology Innovation
- ◆ Newsletter – Voluntary & Professional

Nominations for ACSA National Awards close on Thursday 19th June.

Nomination details and forms are available from

http://www.agedcare.org.au/ACSA_Awards/ACSA_awards.htm

Further enquiries can be directed to Heather Stevens, phone 03 9686 3460 or email

hstevens@agedcare.org.au

** NSW & ACT members note that nominations for your State Awards have now closed. Finalists from these State Awards will be submitted into the National Awards.*

'Missing Residents': Compulsory Reporting Alone Won't Fix It

The Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot, announced this week that residential aged care providers will be required to report 'missing residents' to the Department of Health and Ageing.

In the same announcement she indicated that she had asked the Department's compliance arm - the Office of Aged Care Quality and Compliance (OACQAC) - to consult on the use of 'medi-tags' to 'support the safety of residents with dementia'.

ACSA CEO Greg Mundy said that ACSA supported measures which will enhance the safety and quality of life of residents of aged care homes. The Minister is right though to note that this is a complex matter - there is sometimes a fine line between ensuring someone's safety and depriving them of their liberty.

For measures like this to deal with such complexities we will need more than just increased regulation. We will need:

- A change in the culture of regulation by the Department from one of blame to one of seeking constructive solutions in partnership with providers,
- A rebalancing of the Government's risk management priorities towards residents' rights, respecting providers and away from protecting Ministerial and bureaucratic reputations,
- More funding for care. The Minister's media release refers to ensuring adequate staff on every shift. The amount of staffing we have is determined by the level of funding the Government provides. The proportion of funding which goes to care staffing has remained fairly constant but the value of Government funding has gone steadily down. The Government needs to accept its share of responsibility,
- Technology and design can help with issues such as wandering. Promulgating good ideas and good practice developed by aged care providers and researchers has been our stock in trade for a long time.

If reporting missing residents to the Department simply means that the inspectors turn up, there are important questions that need to be addressed such as: “*What will they do, and how will that help?*”

ACSA looks forward to discussing these and other important questions with the Government.

Evaluation of Accreditation

After three and a half year’s gestation, the report evaluating the impact of accreditation on quality of care and quality of life was released by Minister Elliot this week. Dated October 2007 the report is a product of a long chain of events which started in 2002 with the aged care industry asking the question ‘Who guards the guardians?’ with reference to the Standards Agency.

The report found that the introduction of accreditation served a number of functions related to quality including:

- remove under-performing homes from the sector;
- set a minimum standard for quality;
- raise the standards of quality across the sector;
- establish a degree of consistency across the sector; and
- develop a focus on continuous quality improvement and resident-focused care.

The research also found that accreditation has become more positively received by the sector over time with increased experience in successive rounds of accreditation. The evaluation included a comprehensive literature review, a comparative analysis of accreditation systems, broad stakeholder consultations, surveys and preliminary work on potential quality indicators.

In launching the report, the Minister has committed to work with the aged care sector to ensure older Australians receive the best level of care.

Greg Mundy said ACSA had urged successive governments to look ahead to the next generation of quality management. If this report triggers a process to do this it will have been worthwhile. A focus on what is important to residents is recommended by the consultants (Campbell Research and Consulting) and this is a good place to start.

ACSA will study the report and seek members’ views on its findings and, more particularly, its suggestions for the future. The 119 page report is available at:

www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/ageing-impact-accreditation-reports.htm

Minister Reports on ACFI Introduction

The Minister has said that leading aged care providers are reporting ACFI is delivering better care, reducing red tape, and higher returns per resident especially for those with the greatest care needs such as high care and dementia. She said that this was in line with the ACFI’s intended results.

As at May 26, 2008, 14,478 ACFI appraisals had been submitted to Medicare Australia, well on the way to the 20,000 ACFI appraisals needed to start conclusive analysis of ACFI’s financial impact by Access Economics.

She said that nursing staff have also welcomed the new approach taken in classifying residents for care funding. They say it is consistent with evidence-based nursing practice and better matches residents with care.

Other positive feedback on the ACFI says that it reduces the amount of paperwork that aged care services need to complete. Already more than 30 per cent of ACFI forms are being submitted electronically.

The Australian Government has already indicated that it will take advice and monitor the implementation of the new funding model for aged care through the ACFI Reference Group and will review the ACFI in 18 months.

ACSA will also be monitoring ACFI implementation and raising issues with the Government as they arise.

Transition to ACFI Survey

In the interest of supporting our efforts to assist residential aged care members with the transition to the new ACFI funding system, ACSA (and ACAA) have launched a short on-line survey. This survey aims to provide us with an understanding of how prepared administration managers feel they are to cope with the transition and which areas they are most concerned about. It also asks about training and support resources that you have already used or would like to use if it were available.

The survey should take about 10 minutes and can be reached simply by clicking on the URL below:

www.qedml.com.au/ACFI

Building Certification of Residential Aged Care Homes Report

In response to this Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) report, Minister Elliot said the Department is closely case managing 41 of those services that have yet to meet the higher Commonwealth fire and safety standards, to ensure they are compliant.

The Department advises that the bulk of these works are on track to be completed by the end of this year. As for the requirements on privacy and space which are due to be met by December 2008, the Department advises that only 144 homes out of nearly 3,000 have not yet met the requirements.

In its formal response the Department indicated that the Certification program is expected be reviewed in 2008.

ACSA believes that the work of the Certification program is nearly done and that it should be scrapped after this year. Aged care buildings should be treated like other similar types of building and simply be required to meet relevant parts of the Building Code of Australia. This would also reduce duplication and red tape and would demonstrate the Government's commitment to this worthy objective.

\$6.5 Million to Improve Palliative Support

Minister Elliot has announced extra Federal Government funding of over \$3.5 million for the next three years to fund the Palliative Care for People Living at Home initiative.

She said this project will investigate new ways to allow people requiring palliative care to remain in their homes with their carers, by bringing together existing clinical and nursing services, in-home support, in-house respite and training of carers.

The Minister also launched an innovative web site - CareSearch - that gives people with a terminal illness, their families and carers 24-hour access to practical information, support and advice. CareSearch is funded by a \$3 million grant.

Police Checks

The Department has reported 39 out of 4,468 aged care services were unable to meet their police check requirement last year. Following assistance from the Office of Aged Care Quality and Compliance (OACQAC) 38 out of the 39 services met the requirements, with the one aged care service that failed to comply closing on 19 May 2008.

Minister Elliot provided these details in a media release which said that consultations were occurring with the relevant unions and peak body organisations to address any unforeseen implications of the increased police checks announced on 21 February. She noted that they had already occurred with National Seniors and Babcock and Brown Communities.

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

Government Assistance for Victorian Nursing Home under Administration

Minister Elliot this week outlined the Federal Government's financial support plan for the 156 staff at the Bridgewater Aged Care facility in Melbourne which went into administration on 23 May 2008.

The Department will cover unpaid staff wages and salaries that were owed before the nursing home went into administration on 23 May 2008. The final and exact figures are being determined in conjunction with the administrators, Stephen Longley, David McEvoy and Tim Cuming of Pricewaterhousecoopers (PWC).

The payments are in addition to the nearly \$314,000 in monthly resident subsidies that the Department has been paying to the home to care for the 98 residents.

The Government has also instructed the Department to bring forward this month's resident subsidy payment so that staff can be paid on time by the administrator – and continue to operate the aged care facility.

The Government is seeking assurances from the administrator to ensure the funds are directed to the staff's unpaid salaries.

Should Bridgewater become insolvent, additional help for wages, leave and redundancy may be available under the Australian Government's General Employee Entitlements and Redundancy Scheme (GEERS), which does not cover employer superannuation contributions. Superannuation has its own legislative and regulatory framework, including a compliance regime which is administered by the Australian Taxation Office.

While the Department can provide additional funding support for staff wages, it is unable to pay for the employer superannuation contributions which the provider failed to make.

The Department has also appointed and funded a clinical nurse adviser team to help the administrator of Bridgewater Aged Care Service to ensure the quality of care for its 98 residents.

It has also developed a relocation plan, should that become necessary, so that residents could be moved in a safe and orderly way. Since the weekend, the Department has located 163 available aged care beds within a 20 kilometre radius.

Although the privately owned facility is in Victoria, there have been ownership issues involving the Glebe Administration Board, the investment arm of the Sydney Diocese of the Anglican Church.

The administrator's report is not expected until November 2008 and will cover, inter alia, information of the fate of the estimated \$8 million resident bond payments. The administrator is reported to have suggested that there might be only \$137 left in the relevant account.

Conditional Adjustment Payment Continuation

Minister Elliot has formally signed the documentation to continue and increase the Conditional Adjustment Payment (CAP) beyond 30 June 2008.

National Rental Affordability Scheme

ACSA has made a submission commenting on the Technical Discussion Paper on the Government's proposed National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS).

It supports the Rudd Government's focus on the increasing problems of housing affordability in Australia and welcomes NRAS and the development of the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA).

It urges the Government to consider the distinctive needs of older people within these important initiatives, pointing out that the impact of an ageing Australia in conjunction with changing social roles and expectations will have a profound and far reaching effect in all areas of life, including on housing design and provision.

Some factors that will need to be thought through include:

- The most dramatic decline in home ownership amongst all groups is for people aged 45 to 59. This future older generation will be seeking affordable rental;

- More single women are entering older age and generally they have lower levels of assets (superannuation and unencumbered homes) than men because of marriage breakdown and lack of time in the paid workforce;
- Traditional family support structures for caring for older people are breaking down with fewer carers now having their older parents in their family home;
- With increased longevity comes increasing levels of chronic illness, including mental illness, and disability requiring older people to live close to health and support services; and
- The expectations of all people, not only older people, are increasing so they are less satisfied with a bedsit and poor amenity.

ACSA believes that the Commonwealth should identify older people as a specific target group for NRAS.

The submission is available at www.agedcare.org.au

National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission

ACSA has made a submission to this Commission which is consulting widely with very broad terms of reference and area of enquiry, including ageing.

It has made the following suggestions as ways of improving the care of older people by improving the functioning of our overall system of care.

1. Eliminate arbitrary administrative barriers to flexible client centred care by conducting a systematic audit of aged care and hospital program funding rules from the standpoint of smoothing the path of older people between different care settings.
2. Fund more aged and community care providers to provide step down care for older people on discharge from hospital.
3. Develop a stronger focus on wellness and preventative programs for older people and evaluate their effectiveness.
4. Develop a stronger focus on the use of assistive technology to promote self reliance and self management of chronic conditions.
5. Promote and resource partnerships between hospitals and aged and community care providers to end blame games and facilitate client centred care.
6. Recognise and resource existing services, such as Day Therapy Centres as well as inventing and developing new ones.
7. Develop new mechanisms to improve coordination between aged care services and General Practitioners.
8. Evaluate the incentives provided to encourage GPs to provide services to residents in aged care facilities.
9. Invest in systems and protocols to facilitate the exchange of health information between services across the health and aged care spectrum.

ACSA's submission and others from a number of other aged care and related organizations can be accessed at the Commission's website: www.nhhrc.org.au

New(ish) CEO for ACS Assoc NSW & ACT

ACSA is pleased to congratulate Jill Pretty, who has accepted the position of Chief Executive Officer of Aged & Community Services Association of NSW & ACT.

Jill is well known to ACSA as Manager, Policy & Consultancy for ACS NSW&ACT. She has been with ACS for the past 12 years and brings a wealth of experience to the role which spans the entire spectrum of aged care.

Jill is a Registered Nurse and holds a degree in Management and a Master in Nursing, majoring in Aged and Palliative Care. Prior to joining ACS, she was employed as a Director of Nursing and Hostel Manager.

Jill is a member of the Australian Government Industry Reference Group for the development of the new funding tool, ACFI.

Developing a Community Care Research Agenda

ACSA, the Australian Association of Gerontology and the ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well are collaborating on an ongoing program of work aimed at developing a community care research agenda. The aim is to build a deeper and long-term relationship between researchers and community care providers.

This collaboration commenced at ACSA's 2nd National Community Care Conference in May 2008 in Sydney. A Research workshop:

- brought together leading community care practitioners and researchers;
- launched the findings of recently undertaken community care research by Baptcare on Predictors Influencing the Change in Health (PITCH) of community care clients;
- identified & discussed why research is important and the tools available to support research; and
- highlighted preliminary thinking about research priorities.

Developing a Community Care Research Agenda, which is now on the ACSA website at www.agedcare.org.au, outlines all of the areas identified for comment and suggestions for other issues.

Once we have your feedback a final list will be forwarded to a Reference Group – working on behalf of the three organisations – and they will commence the task of developing research questions and priorities.

Please forward your comments to Pat Sparrow, National Policy Manager, ACSA at psparrow@agedcare.org.au by Monday 30 June 2008.

New ACSA Publications

The Winter 2008 edition of ACSA's *Agendas* magazine, and the June 2008 edition (vol 27 Issue 2) *Australasian Journal on Ageing* (co-published with the Australian Council on the Ageing, Australian Association of Gerontology and the Australian and New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine) are now available.

Subscription details are at www.agedcare.org.au

New National Disability Services Funding

State and Territory Disability Ministers have agreed to deliver \$900 million in funding, on top of the Australian Governments \$1 billion commitment.

The \$1.9 billion is expected to provide around 2,300 in home support places, 2,300 supported accommodation places, 9,900 individual support packages and 10,000 much needed respite places, in a range of forms across Australia.

Federal, State and Territory Disability Ministers are still meeting to negotiate a new Disability Agreement, which is now due to be signed in 2009, in line with the reform of Specific Purpose Payments.

http://www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/E6430368-595B-4F8A-8664-7A28E692C368/3671/Disability_Ministers_Communique_30May08.pdf .

Survey of Those Providing Informal Care for People with Dementia

Alzheimer's Australia is seeking the assistance of people across Australia who currently provide, or have previously provided, informal care for people with dementia.

The objectives of the work commissioned from Access Economics is to identify ways to address the future needs of the dementia caring workforce, including a survey to collect the views of family carers about different models of care.

People who are currently caring for, or have cared for, someone with dementia are invited to undertake the survey between 9 June and 13 July. The survey is currently available at <http://monaro1.surveyengine.com/aasurvey>

There is also a Helpline for carers if they want help with the survey – ph 1800 882 506.

IT Readiness Survey of the Aged Care Sector

This report, undertaken in 2006 by CHIK Services for the Department, has just been released. It reports on the first survey of residential, community and home-based aged care services provided in Australia, and follows up on a similar 2002 report which only looked at residential aged care.

The report provides a starting point from which the Department and the industry can disseminate information and quantify the sector's capabilities, knowledge and skills. It reports a greatly increased use of IT for administrative purposes but still fairly low levels of use to support clinical practice.

Covering 77% of services across Australia it is a 'rich and comprehensive (and comparative) data source' of current usage, workforce access to IT, support, training, security processes, investment, and drivers, barriers and priorities for sharing information electronically.

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-rescare-econnect-itsurvey.htm>

Greek Care Website

Froniditha Care's new web site called Greek Care is now operational. The web site presents advice to service providers about the traditions, culture, religion, language and other important information relating to people from Greek speaking background. It has audio clips of common phrases.

The web site was funded by the Department's Community Partnership Program and has been developed after extensive consultations with service providers.

Froniditha invites you to log on, www.greekcare.org.au, explore the site, check out the information and tell us what you think. We will welcome your feedback as part of the ongoing process of developing and refining the site.

Further information is available through information@greekcare.org.au.

DonorTec Software and Hardware for Non Profit Groups

DonorTec provides donated software and hardware, including the latest products, from companies such as Microsoft and Cisco to eligible Australia non profit groups with income Tax Exempt Status (ITE), to assist them build their ITC capacity.

The DonorTec Program is provided by Community Information Strategies Australia Inc (CISA) in partnership with TechSoup. Both CISA and Compunetor/TechSoup are non profit organisations that are part of a global partnership for technology donations with companies such as Microsoft and Cisco.

More information and guidelines on eligibility at www.donortec.com.au.

Volunteering in Australia

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has released this report which looks at changing patterns in voluntary work between 1995 and 2006, using ABS statistics it provides information on volunteering rate, trends, hours, origins on a national and state basis.

http://www.facsia.gov.au/communities/volunteering_in_australia/

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