

The National Report

3 July, 2008 – Issue 183
Aged & Community Services Australia



Contents

Housing Affordability for Senior Alliance
Which Way Home?- A New Approach to Homelessness Green Paper
Apartments for Life Model
2008 ACSA National Conference and Annual Awards
Health and Hospital Reform Commission
RCS Reviews
\$8.7 Million to Enhance Quality Aged Care
ACIC Capital Survey for Members
Charitable Sector Employees Protected
Transition Care Program
New Office of Rural Health
ATO Non-Profit News
Grant Thornton Aged Care Survey Post Hogan Review
2008 Not for Profit Remuneration Report
Ageing Consultative Committee and Membership
Best Practice in Community Care Forum 17 July Melbourne
Election Promises to Veterans' Benefits Operational
Annual Providers Statements to Medicare
ACSA Member International Vice President
Reports, Research
Office of the Aged Care Commissioner for Complaints – Annual Report
RCS Statistics
Community Care Indexation Rate
AMA Calls for Expansion of GP Services to Residential Aged Care
Anti Poverty Week 12-18 October
New Patch to Ease Alzheimer's Symptoms
UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Australian Dementia Research

Housing Affordability for Seniors Alliance

ACSA, the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) and the Council on the Ageing (COTA) have formed The Housing Affordability for Seniors Alliance (the Alliance) to highlight the scale of the housing problems facing numbers of older Australians.

The Alliance held a successful *Older Persons Affordable Housing Forum* in Canberra on 1 July, with around 70 of Australia's leading thinkers and planners in this area generating ideas and momentum for new housing collaborations and projects.

The Minister for Housing, The Hon Tanya Plibersek addressed the meeting and outlined existing and future policy and funding options involving the Alliance and ACSA members. The Minister; Head of the Department of Families and Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Dr Jeff Harmer; the Chair of the National Affordable Housing Summit, Professor Julian Disney; Chair of the Housing Supply Council, Dr Owen Donald; and Community Sector Banking expert Peter Quarmby, all offered practical plus big picture advice on how to take this important issue forward, to access funding now and available in the near future, and work together to develop new strategies and co-operative initiatives.

ACSA CEO, Greg Mundy, said that many Independent Living Units and other housing for low income older people in the past – much of it by ACSA members - needed to be renovated and replaced. Church, community and local councils have available land that could be combined with government subsidies to address housing affordability amongst seniors. New opportunities have been created by the Government's housing initiatives and ACSA is working to ensure that some of these are available to ACSA members.

The communiqué from the meeting is attached to this copy of National Report and can also be downloaded from the ACSA website:

www.agedcare.org.au *Affordable Housing Forum under Hot Topics on home page*

ACSA expects to be able to make an important announcement shortly regarding progress on developing, promoting and facilitating affordable housing options which will benefit many members. Watch this space!

Which Way Home?

- A new Approach to Homelessness Green Paper

ACSA has made a submission - This Way Home - on the Green Paper released by the Government.

We have included relevant points made at the Housing Affordability Forum and in the Alliance suggesting alternative funding arrangements and incentives to encourage an increase in available accommodation and care for homeless persons.

ACSA also believes that the Department of Health and Ageing should, specifically monitor the impact of the introduction of the ACFI on funding for the organisations which cater for the elderly homeless and take remedial action if required to ensure that services for this group remain viable.

Funding should be available for mainstream services to be supported by specialist organisations, to ensure that elderly homeless gain access to services and receive appropriate care.

In addition all aged care assessment services should receive adequate training and support on the needs of the older homeless.

ACSA's submission is at www.agedcare.org.au

Apartments for Life Model

Hans Becker, Head of the Humanitas Foundation recently visited Australia as the guest of the Benevolent Society in NSW. Humanitas has developed an innovative housing model in the Netherlands, which allows 95 per cent of older people to live in their own homes until the end of their lives.

The Benevolent Society is developing affordable housing for older people along the Humanitas model. www.bensoc.org.au has details of the plan and Humanitas philosophy.

2008 ACSA National Conference

"Aged Care in the Fast Lane": Update

On-line registration is now available at www.agedcare.org.au

- **ACSA has released the Registration Brochure** for its 2008 conference *Aged Care in the Fast Lane: More Clients, More Cost, More Competition* to be held in Adelaide from 28 September to 1 October 2008. Hard copy brochures are now being distributed.

ACSA has introduced a new 'group registration' category to assist organisations who register four or more people to attend by providing a discounted rate. This option is also available to groups of small country or regional organisations.

To obtain this discount you must register by the close of the early bird period. Register online or print the form at the back of the brochure and fax or post to:
All Occasions Management, 41 Anderson St, Thebarton SA 5031 Fax 08 81252233.

The brochure can be downloaded from the ACSA website at:

<http://www.agedcare.org.au/Conferences/Upcoming-acsa-events.html>

- **Annual Awards** - ACSA wishes to thank all those who found the time to enter their facility, service, activity or employee for the ACSA Awards. The careful process of finalisation and selection of winners is now underway with distinguished community judges joining industry experts in the lengthy, challenging but inspiring process.
- On 27 June Agency CEO Mark Brandon wrote to Service Providers requesting notification of times when key staff will be unavailable, to assist with their visit plans. Aged Care Queensland has advised the agency that 300 plus care managers from around Queensland will be attending the NIMAC conference on 17/18 July. NIMAC advised the Agency that it is very important in the current workforce climate to do everything possible to enable care staff to take up professional development opportunities, and that it would be appreciated if visits were not scheduled over this period of time. With every media story referring to the 'increased' number of spot checks to be implemented from 1 July, it will be interesting to see if routine visits, even if they are spot checks, can be scheduled around these dates.

Those intending to come to the ACSA National Conference may also wish to advise the Agency similarly.

Health and Hospital Reform Commission

The Health and Hospital Reform Commission (H&HRC) the new body charged with developing a plan to fix Australia's disjointed health system, has been conducting forums and roundtables around Australia.

They have not been well publicised in our sector despite aged care being very much part of the H&HRC's terms of reference. Details of their meetings may be found on their website www.nhhrc.org.au although the current round is nearly finished.

ACSA has contacted the H&HRC to make sure that adequate consultation occurs with key aged care industry bodies in the future as the work of the Commission progresses.

Health reform will not progress unless all the key stakeholders are properly involved. ACSA's submission to the H&HRC is on both organisations' websites.

RCS Reviews

From July 1, Commonwealth Nursing Officers will conduct 5,000 reviews under the Resident Classification Scale (RCS) in all States and Territories.

This review was officially announced by the Treasurer in the May 13 Budget and included a commitment to 'claw back' \$18 Million from the RCS which has been replaced by ACFI.

The Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot has promoted the review with the public by highlighting in bold print that ...**"The data from the Office of Aged Care Quality and Compliance within the Department of Health and Ageing shows 37 per cent of claims upon examination had to be downgraded by Department of Health and Ageing assessors."**

One of the reasons for replacing the RCS with the ACFI was to address the volatility of RCS classifications and especially to reduce the scope for subjective judgements - including by Departmental assessors - and subsequent changes.

ACSA is concerned that a specific revenue target has been set in advance, and will monitor the process and outcomes of these reviews to ensure that they are properly conducted and that their quality is consistent in all States and Territories.

The sooner we get rid of this system the better.

\$8.7 Million to Enhance Quality Aged Care

Meanwhile Minister Elliot has announced a new funding round worth more than \$8.7 million to encourage homes to use improved evidence-based clinical care. As part of the Australian Government's \$21.6 million over four years Encouraging Best Practice in Residential Aged Care (EBPRAC) program.

The funding round will target areas including wound management; incontinence management; behaviour management; infection control; and palliative care.
Closing Date - 3pm on 30 July, 2008.

Details of the first round EBPRAC projects can be found at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-bestpractice-program.htm>

Further details of the EBPRAC funding round can be found on the Department of Health and Ageing's web site on the 'Tenders and Grants' page at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/grantEBPRAC2008>

ACIC Capital Survey for Members

ACSA and ACAA are conducting a survey on members' intentions to undertake capital works. Please take the time to complete the survey on our website at www.agedcare.org.au (under Hot Topics)

Charitable Sector Employees Protected

Legislation has been passed that will protect charitable sector employees from Howard Government 2006 Budget measures that would have seen many low income employees lose up to \$100 a fortnight from 1 July.

The passage of this legislation is a last-minute reprieve for employees in the not-for-profit sector from the Howard Government's fringe benefit tax changes.

As reported in the last National Report, ACSA and a number of other charitable organizations made representations to the new government to ensure that low-income employees in the charitable sector were not penalized.

Transition Care Program

Minister Elliot has announced 228 fully-funded transition places with some already underway as from 1 July.

Examples of eligible low intensity therapy services may include physiotherapy, occupational therapy, dietetics, podiatry, speech therapy, counselling and social work.

Examples of personal care services may include assistance with showering, dressing; eating and eating aids; managing incontinence; transport to appointments; and moving, walking, and communication.

The Minister said that a soon to be published evaluation by Flinders University of 5,510 older people found when two groups of frail older Australians are discharged from hospital those who received transition care had fewer re-admissions to hospital and were less likely to move into nursing homes.

There will be better coverage of transition care in rural and regional areas such as the Hunter region of NSW, the Central region of Victoria, the Central and Northern regions of Queensland, country areas in South Australia and the North West of Tasmania. There will also be increased transition care provision in high growth areas such as the coastal regions of NSW and Queensland.

New Office of Rural Health

An Office of Rural Health has been established within the Department of Health and Ageing, in the Primary and Ambulatory Care Division.

The Rudd Government has created the Office of Rural Health to drive rural health reform in response to the findings of the Audit of Health Workforce in Rural and Regional Australia.

The audit found that the current supply of health professionals is not sufficient to meet current needs and the supply of health professionals in many rural and regional areas is low to very poor. The audit also revealed that the Liberal Government relied on 17 year-old population figures - from 1991 Census figures - in developing incentives for doctors and other rural workforce policies.

The Office will draw together rural workforce and rural service delivery programs, and will provide a focus for the reform of federal rural health policy and programs.

As a first priority, over the next 12 months the Office will review the Australian Government's 60 targeted rural health programs, as well as the classification systems that determine eligibility for rural program funding. Reviews of these programs are necessary to ensure that workforce programs and incentives respond to current population figures and genuine need, and that service delivery programs and rural health professionals can better respond to the needs of rural communities.

ATO Non-Profit News

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has released two information items on superannuation in its Non-Profit News Service. They advise to check that payroll systems are calculating superannuation guarantee correctly - Changes to super from 1 July 2008 may affect the way calculations are made.

The ATO is also reminding non-profit organisations that from 1 July 2008, employer-nominated super funds (also known as default funds) must offer minimum levels of life insurance death cover to members.

Employers will need to check that their employer-nominated super fund is a complying fund and offers the minimum insurance cover to satisfy the choice of super fund legislative requirements.

Feedback or enquiries to the online feedback facility on the ATO website www.ato.gov.au, or by email to: npc-publications@ato.gov.au

Grant Thornton Aged Care Survey Post Hogan Review

It has been over 4 years since the *Review of Pricing Arrangements in Residential Aged Care 2004* was undertaken by Professor Warren Hogan, and the intervening period has been one of significant change in the residential aged care industry.

The Government has announced a review of future arrangements, and a *Grant Thornton Aged Care Survey* will provide invaluable information about industry performance for providers, investors, the Government and the public.

The survey is being undertaken at no cost to the Government or aged care providers. Aggregate results will be free to contributors, allowing providers to measure relative performance.

ACSA supports participation in the survey, which will preserve confidentiality for participants and will help ensure future changes are positive for care providers as well as the elderly and families.

Professor Hogan is supporting the survey and says "This initiative represents a truly independent national aged care survey that will facilitate the development of an uncompromised report and will enable providers to glean a realistic appreciation of their commercial competitiveness."

To participate please visit the Grant Thornton Website:

<http://www.grantthornton.com.au/Industry-specialisation/AgedCareSurvey.asp>

and follow the links from the home page to the survey.

2008 Not for Profit Remuneration Report

Survey forms for the 2008 Not for Profit Remuneration Report have been mailed to over 4,000 Not for Profit organisations, including ACSA members. A strong response from our sector will be of benefit to the sector in comparing and establishing rates.

Should any member not receive the survey form in the mail by next week, please contact Tracy Portarianos at Enterprise Care on ph 1300 659 613 and a copy will be forwarded immediately. Completed survey forms are due back to Enterprise Care by Friday 25 July 2008 www.enterprisecare.com.au

Ageing Consultative Committee

Minister Elliot has announced changes to the role and composition of various aged and community care advisory and technical committees by combining them into one new Ageing Consultative Committee (ACC) which will provide advice directly to her.

The ACC will focus efficiency in bed allocation process, the review of aged care planning ratios, proposed changes to the regulatory framework and the better integration of community and residential care.

There will also be changes to other advisory groups, to give them a current focus, as many were established to advise on matters that have now been implemented.

Other advisory committee changes include:

- The Aged Care Workforce Committee has been reviewed, with new terms of reference and a smaller, more expert membership.
- As announced in March, the Aged Care Funding Instrument Reference Group will continue beyond 20 March 2008 as a consultative mechanism, and to assist in the review of the Aged Care Funding Instrument which will start in 18 months;
- Transactions and Technology Reference Group will now take responsibility for consulting with Medicare Australia and industry on electronic payments in aged care.

Ageing Consultative Committee Membership

Provider representation

ACSA; Aged Care Association Australia; Catholic Health Australia; Anglicare Australia; Uniting Care Australia; ACH Group; Retirement Village Association of Australia; Baptist Community Services; Babcock & Brown Communities

Consumer representation

National Seniors Australia Ltd; Carers Australia; Alzheimer's Australia; COTA Over 50s Ltd

Professional/employee representation

Australian Medical Association; Health Services Union of Australia; Australian and New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine; Allied Health Professions Australia; Royal College of Nursing Australia; Australian Nursing Federation; Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union

Government representation

Department of Health and Ageing (Chair); Department of Veterans' Affairs
Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Ltd

Best Practice in Community Care Forum 17 July Melbourne

A National Forum on best practice in community care is being held on Thursday 17 July from 10.00am – 4.30pm at the John Scott Meeting House, La Trobe University, Bundoora Victoria.

As part of the Australian government initiative, Securing the Future of Aged Care for Australians – ensuring Quality in Community Care, the Department of Health & Ageing has engaged consultants to assist with a project on evidence-based best practice models for older people receiving community care.

The four major domains being examined in this project are case management/care coordination (identified as a priority area); falls prevention; medication management; and wound management. Special interests that apply across the four domains include Healthy ageing and dementia

The service focus for implementation of best practice is packaged care and carer respite services.

If you would like to express interest in attending this forum, or would like more information, please email or phone Laura Varanelli on l.varanelli@latrobe.edu.au or (03) 9479 5881.

Election Promises to Veterans' Benefits Operational

A number of key election commitments took effect from 1 July, delivering a number of increased payments to veterans, war widows, widowers and their dependants, including:

- ◆ Automatic war widows pensions to those surviving partners of temporary special rate or intermediate rate pensioners;
- ◆ Income support supplement of up to \$163.20 a fortnight to eligible war widows and widowers who are under 58 years old; and
- ◆ Bereavement payments to single recipients of the special rate and extreme disablement adjustment disability pensions who die in indigent circumstances.

Annual Provider Statements to Medicare

ACSA joins with State Associations in urging all those who have not yet done so, especially those using online claiming functionality, to send in a new signed 2008/9 Annual Approved Provider Statement, which was due in by 30 June 2008.

In September 2007 Medicare Australia introduced an Annual Approved Provider Statement to replace the Authorised Signatory form. The Annual Approved Provider Statement enables providers to send through online claiming events without the need for electronically signing events using Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) keys.

In May 2008 Medicare Australia wrote to all Approved Providers requesting that they complete and return a 2008/09 Aged Care Approved Provider Statement by 30 June 2008. Not all of the 2008/09 Aged Care Approved Provider Statements have been received by Medicare Australia.

If your service does not have a 2008/09 Aged Care Approved Provider statement in place then you will be unable to lodge electronic events to Medicare Australia from 1 July 2008.

For services using third party software products to transmit events directly to Medicare Australia you will get the following message:

“The event has not been signed. The event must be signed using PKI Individual certificate if a current provider statement is not registered. Please contact 1800 195 206 for further assistance”

For services that send ACFI events via Medicare Australia’s Web Form then the following will apply:

If you are registered against one service and this service doesn't have a 2008/09 Approved Provider Statement in place then, when you try to register an event the Register Event Selection screen will display "No eligible services". If you are registered against a number of services then you will only be able to register an event for those services that have a 2008/09 Approved Provider Statement in place.

Once Medicare Australia has received and processed the Annual Provider Statement you can continue to send online events.

To minimise the impact of provider statements that have not been received by 30 June 2008, on receipt Medicare Australia will endeavour to process these as quickly as possible.

For further information on the Approved Provider Statement, or to download a fillable pdf statement, visit www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/aged.

ACSA Member International Vice President

Former ACSA President Glenn Bunney, CEO Sundale Garden Village, has been elected as Vice President of the International Association of Homes and Services for the Ageing (IAHSA), the peak international industry organization for aged care providers with members from all around the globe.

ACSA is a foundation member of IAHSA.

IAHSA is recognized as the international peak body for the global aged care industry and enjoys recognition as an official NGO with the United Nations. It also has alliances and relationships in place with similar bodies representing consumers, suppliers and academic researchers focusing on the needs of older people.

Our congratulations to Glenn on his appointment.

Reports, Research

Office of the Aged Care Commissioner: Commissioner for Complaints – Annual Report - 1 JULY 2006 - 30 JUNE 2007

The latest report of the activities of the office has been presented to Parliament and is available: <http://www.agedcarecommissioner.net.au/pdf/06-07-annual-report.pdf>

RCS Statistics Update – March 2008

The latest and last RCS statistics are now available. They comprise

- (a) RCS review statistics by State from 1 January 2008 to 31 March 2008,
- (b) Outcome of Reviews on each Question conducted in the period 1 January 2008 to 31 March 2008 on a national basis,
- (c) Graphical presentation of changes to individual questions as a result of reviews conducted in the period 1 January 2008 to 31 March 2008 on a national basis, and
- (d) RCS Appraisals as at 31 March 2008.

Appraisals as at 31 March 2008 will be available shortly on the Department's Internet site at the following address.

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/content/ageing-rcspage-rcsstats.htm>

RCS Review Statistics by State 1 January 2008 to 31 March 2008

State	Unchanged		Upgraded		Downgraded		Reviews Total	Facilities
	No	%	No	%	No	%		
NSW/ACT	815	57%	60	4%	565	39%	1440	118
VIC	858	69%	103	8%	281	23%	1242	108
QLD	555	69%	23	3%	231	29%	809	68
WA	129	49%	5	2%	130	49%	264	22
SA/NT	185	56%	9	3%	136	41%	330	24
TAS	92	69%	6	4%	36	27%	134	12
Total	2634	62%	206	5%	1379	33%	4219	352

RCS Statistics for the Quarters ending September 2007 and December 2007

Nationally Q12 *Emotional Dependence* and Q13 *Danger to Self & Others* continue to be the major areas of downgrade and Q14 *Other Behaviours* is the question predominantly upgraded.

Community Care Indexation Rate

The Australian Government has approved the annual indexation for Community Care. These subsidy increases amount to \$11 million, indexation of 2.35 percent.

AMA Calls for Expansion of GP Services to Residential Aged Care

The Australian Medical Association has urged the Government to address the policy inertia that continued to restrict medical services for the care of sick and frail residents of aged care homes. It is calling for aged care policies that:

- ◆ Introduce dedicated Medicare payments that improve access to GPs and medical specialists for older Australians;
- ◆ Enable more GPs to use general practice nurses to assist in the delivery of care in residential and community settings;
- ◆ Increase recurrent funding for community and residential aged care to meet the real costs of care;
- ◆ Adopt strategies that lead to wage parity between the acute and aged care sectors to encourage skilled nurses back into the sector with the capacity to deliver quality aged care services; and
- ◆ Improve clinical management and the delivery of care in the residential aged care sector by introducing computer systems that facilitate medical records and prescribing, and which connect the GP to the residential aged care facility and the pharmacy.

Anti Poverty Week 12-18 October

Anti-Poverty Week, which is taking place from 12 to 18 October, aims to raise awareness of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship and to encourage people to take action to address these problems.

To achieve this, individuals or groups are invited to organise or participate in activities during the week, so as to reach as broad a range of people as possible.

Details on how to participate are at www.antipovertyweek.org.au

New patch to ease Alzheimer's symptoms

A skin patch to treat the early signs of Alzheimer's disease is now available under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

The treatment is claimed to be "smoother" and have fewer side-effects than current pill formulas widely used by dementia patients. More than 100,000 Australians have the degenerative brain disorder and while there is no cure, four medications are available to help alleviate the symptoms in people with mild to moderate disease.

The drugs do not impact on disease progression but are able to improve the ability to talk and do tasks like supermarket shopping, keeping a person independent for longer.

Aricept is the most widely used but the market has expanded with Exelon, now also available in patch form at a subsidised rate from July 1. Two other dementia treatments - Reminyl and the newly-funded Ebixa, for restricted use only - are also subsidised.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Australia signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities when it opened for signature on 30 March 2007. It is proposed that Australia consent to be bound by the Convention through ratification under Article 43.

Early ratification would be highly desirable given Australia's active role in the negotiation of the Convention text, early signature and continued international support for the Convention. It is proposed that this treaty action be undertaken as soon as practicable for these reasons, as well as to increase Australia's prospects of participating in the inaugural election of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities established under Article 34 of the Convention.

Australian Dementia Research

Alzheimer's Australia has released a report '*Australian Dementia Research*' that recommends annual funding for dementia research be increased three-fold to \$36 million in response to the growing economic and social impact of the dementia epidemic.

Prepared by the Dementia Collaborative Research Centre at the University of NSW, the report concludes that current investment over the last six years in dementia research was about \$13 million, 0.6% of the total direct costs of the disease. It recommends investment in dementia research should be maintained at 1.5% of the direct cost of dementia to keep pace with the increasing costs of treatment and care.

By 2030, the total cost to the health care system of dementia is projected to rise to \$8.2 billion and a number of people with dementia to double to more than 460,000.

The report concludes that dementia research in Australia is significantly under funded in relation to other chronic diseases. According to 2003 figures, dementia funding is 50% of research funding for cancer, relative to the current disease burden and 30% of research funding for cardiovascular disease, relative to current direct cost of care.

Professor Henry Brodaty one of the authors of the report, said, "There is a strong case for dementia to be recognised by the National Health and Medical Research Council as a National Health Priority Area." www.alzheimers.org.au

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 www.agedcare.org.au