

# *The National Report*

**1 May, 2009 – Issue 202**  
**Aged & Community Services Australia**



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## **Senate Standing Committee Report into Residential and Community Aged Care**

The Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration *Report into Residential and Community Aged Care* in Australia was released on 29 April. It calls for root and branch reform of the sector, and makes over 31 recommendations for change. National Report readers are urged to go to [http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/fapa\\_ctte/aged\\_care/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/fapa_ctte/aged_care/index.htm).

The key themes of the report are review and partnership.

It recommends the establishment of a national aged care forum, and taskforce, to consider the current and future challenges the sector faces including workforce; indexation; rural and remote service provision and the effectiveness of the current viability supplement; expectations and needs of CALD older people, homeless people and other socio-economically disadvantaged persons; indigenous Australians and their communities. In addition the taskforce would undertake a review of the planning ratio drawing on all demographic data and social information. The forum would be representative of all key stakeholders including consumers.

An all encompassing review of the Aged Care Act and related regulations, in cooperation with the forum, is also recommended. The review would be undertaken using a client focussed approach and include consideration of the issue of professional nursing and other aged care staffing requirements and options to enable greater flexibility in payments and services for a client centred aged care system

There are also a large number of other recommendations, which reflect the issues industry has been raising for a number of years including:

- Reviewing and publishing the audited general purpose financial reports;
- Establishing a nationally consistent methodological approach to data gathering and research on the financial status of the residential and community aged care sector;
- Reviewing and addressing deficiencies in information in the aged care sector;
- A test to measure the financial wellbeing of the industry;
- Reviewing, rationalising, and costing compliance and new regulation requirements;
- Implementing measures, including additional funding, to assist small providers to meet compliance requirements;
- Consideration to an independent mechanism to continually assess the indexation formula;
- Reviewing the implications of making “elderly homeless” a special needs category in the Aged Care Act;
- Initiatives to attract culturally appropriate staff;
- Implementing the recommendations of the 2007 National Review of Aged Care Assessment Teams as well as reviewing the legislative requirement for re-assessment of residents moving from low to high care within an aged care complex and those entering with a low care approval but require high care. Additional ACAT recommendations include launching an information campaign on recent ACAT reforms, national education campaign on ACATs for clients and affirming the ACATs as a single nationally consistent entry point into aged care services;
- Review the concept of separating accommodation and care taking into account the views, concerns and recommendation of stakeholders including the Productivity Commission;
- Expanding community care and services to meet growing demand and expected quality service provision outcomes.

While not in the main recommendations the report also urges Government to maintain the current funding arrangements, including the CAP, until such time as the all encompassing review has occurred. The report did not advocate extending the CAP to community care.

The Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot responded positively to the report referring to a meeting with ACSA and Aged Care Association Australia on 30 April to consider the report. She also quoted a Departmental official in saying that ...

“aged care providers are relatively, although, of course, not completely, sheltered from the effects of the global financial crisis in comparison with other sectors. That is because the income stream in aged care is largely underwritten by the government - to the tune of about 70 per cent in residential care.

The resident contributions are underpinned by the aged pension and to the extent that older people are able to pay less as the government pays more, so there is no need for customers to stay away from aged care on the grounds of costs.”

ACSA CEO Greg Mundy, along with ACAA CEO Rod Young, met with Minister Elliott on 30<sup>th</sup> April and discussed the Committee Report and the coming Federal Budget. As to be expected the Minister was positive but non committal on any particular action as a result of the report or on what may or may not be in the budget for aged care. One issue that was acknowledged was the need to consider the senate’s recommendations and those of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission together since they cover some of the same ground in broadly complementary but not identical ways.

ACSA believes that the Senate Inquiry Report reinforces the messages industry and other key stakeholders have been giving Governments of both persuasions over a long period of time. Fundamental change and immediate action is required to ensure we have a viable aged care service service system that can meet the needs of older people now and in the future.

## 2020 Summit and Aged Care

The Government has released its response to the recommendations from the 2020 Summit held in April 2008. There was one heading “Funding aged care” under which:

- Introduce a hypothecated superannuation charge for aged care.
- Introduce a Medicare levy for aged care and for severe conditions and illnesses.
- Allow residents to contribute to high-care beds, were listed

The government responded by saying that they were taking “no further action at this time”, and commented that: “Other work is underway to meet the needs of an ageing population. The Government is committed to a quality system that meets the needs of an ageing population. To achieve these aims the government is providing \$300 million in zero real interest loans to aged care providers to help them build or expand facilities in areas of need, and is fully funding an additional 2,000 transition care places over the next four years to 2011–12, at a total cost of \$293.2 million. This will double the number of places available for older Australians who no longer need to be in hospital but who require more time and support before returning home or to residential care.”

This response flies in the face of the reform advocated by industry and supported by an increasing number of stakeholders including most recently the report from the Senate Inquiry and the Interim Report of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission. ACSA believes they need to do better than this.

## Bed Licences Returned

Information obtained by the federal opposition from the Department of Health and Ageing shows that 786 aged care licences were handed back between November 2007 and March this

year, Opposition Spokeswoman on Aged Care, Margaret May, has claimed in a media release dated 23 April.

The largest returns were in Queensland, where providers gave up 283 beds, and Western Australia, where providers handed back 224 beds.

Large providers in both states announced last year that they were cancelling plans to make licences operational.

This is another indication that the major reform recommended by ACSA and other stakeholders is critical for the health of aged care services and older people. These warning signs can not continue to be ignored.

## **More Regulation: Aged Care Bonds to Face More Scrutiny**

The Australian on 27 April has reported that “A crackdown is being planned on aged care providers using lucrative accommodation bonds to cover operating losses or divert money to non-aged care uses.”

Patricia Karvelas wrote that “Options being prepared by the Department of Health and Ageing for the Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot, say in recent cases aged care providers in financial distress have been using bonds to cover operating losses or possibly diverting them to non-aged care uses.”

The department advises that, as of June last year, approved providers held about 58,000 accommodation bonds worth \$7.7 billion. The requirements in the Aged Care Act 1997 "are very general" in relation to using these bonds.

In the options prepared by the department, providers would be held accountable for the subsidies they received through greater levels of reporting to the Government, and providers could be given more obligations under prudential arrangements if they misused money.

ACSA will oppose any reduction in flexibility and will point out to Government that, if adequate levels of funding were provided people wouldn't use Bonds for operational purposes.

## **Survey of Independent Living Units**

Do you provide housing for people on low incomes or with few assets? ACSA is circulating a survey on the provision of Independent Living Units that attract Commonwealth Rental Assistance, i.e. where the ingoing contribution is less than \$124,500.

These housing units, sometimes known as rentals, are generally located in retirement villages but others may be found dotted throughout the community.

ILUs were built primarily by not-for-profit providers from the 1950s to the mid 1980s with funding from the Commonwealth. Some have been renovated and ‘made new’ on a regular basis across that time span; others have fallen below current community housing standards. According to AHURI research in 2002, there are over 34,000 such units Australia-wide, comprising around 27% of all aged care housing, a not inconsiderable proportion.

The aim of the survey is to find whether the industry has lost any of these ILUs since the 2002 survey, whether providers have upgraded them or plan to, how much this would cost, and who calls them home.

ACSA will use this information for lobbying and to prepare a submission to Government on the action required to maintain this valuable stock of housing for older people. Our survey is reached by clicking on the following weblink.

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=oaKqwBWWhtlBLoKgjxBdw\\_3d\\_3d](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=oaKqwBWWhtlBLoKgjxBdw_3d_3d)

Please fill it in and press 'DONE' to return it to us, by the **22 May**. If you have any queries please contact Lesley Dredge on 03 9686 3460 or email: [ldredge@agedcare.org.au](mailto:ldredge@agedcare.org.au).

## Day Therapy Centre Funding

The Department of Health and Ageing advises that it will be contacting Day Therapy Centres over the next month to offer a two year funding agreement to existing services. These agreements would expire on 30 June 2011.

This is a move in the right direction and provides some greater surety of funding for these important services. ACSA has advocated for three year funding and for report on the review of Day Therapy Centres to be released so that future directions, including appropriate funding, can be considered and resolved. ACSA will continue to advocate on behalf of Day Therapy Centres.

## First Aid Training for Carers

Minister Elliot on 28 April has announced that the Federal Government will provide a one-off \$114,000 grant to the St John Ambulance to pilot a program to help provide courses for up to 2,000 carers annually carers in practical life saving first aid.

The grant will help fund the design and delivery of a specific first aid course for carers by offering flexible practical and online components.

This course will be designed for people voluntarily caring for frail elderly or disabled relatives or friends.

The flexible model would allow carers to take the first aid course using workbooks, a CD-ROM or online, followed by practical workshop.

Existing respite care programs would allow the carers to take the time to attend the practical one-day workshop.

## Community Partners Program Funding Applications Open

The Government advertised (25 April) for applications for the next round of the Community Partners Program (CPP) – for projects to help older people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

More than 740 projects have received financial support through CPP since January 2005. Projects to be considered include:

- Those that provide information on aged care services;
- Translation and referral services;

- Establishing partnerships between aged care providers and culturally and linguistically diverse communities; and

An independent competitive selection process will be coordinated by the Department of Health and Ageing to ensure applicants are given an equal opportunity to receive funding.

## Jobs Fund to Build Non Profit Capacity and Strengthen Community Resilience

\$500 million will be invested in the Third Sector to strengthen non profit organisations and build community resilience, Senator Stephens, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector announced on 20 April.

Applications are now open for the Jobs Fund that provides grants of up to \$2 million dollars for non profit organisations to undertake projects that invest in local community infrastructure and build social capital.

The Fund includes two streams that provide grants of up to \$2 million for non profit organisations:

- The \$300 million **Local Jobs** stream provides funding for community infrastructure projects with a focus on promoting environmental-friendly technology and heritage.
- The \$200 million **Get Communities Working** provides grants for innovative employment and social projects that build community resilience.

Funding will commence on 1 July 2009.

\$11 million of the Get Communities Working stream is available for temporary financial assistance to non profit organisations whose donor base is under pressure as a result of the economic downturn.

Proposals must be submitted by 22 May 2009. Guidelines can be downloaded from <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/Pages/JobsFund.aspx>

## Support for Aged Care Training (SACT) program funding.

Funding is now available under the Support for Aged Care Training (SACT) program for short course training places for personal care workers in eligible aged care services in rural and regional Australia.

Eligible aged care services are:

- Residential aged care facilities in rural and remote locations that are eligible for, or in receipt of, the Viability Supplement under the Aged Care Act 1997;
- Multipurpose Services as defined under the Aged Care Act 1997 and Aged Care Principles 1999 that are eligible for, or in receipt of, the Viability Supplement; and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flexible aged care services which have at least one residential place and are operating under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Strategy 1994.

More information on the funding round, including the application form and application guidelines can be accessed at <http://www.health.gov.au/tenders>

## Community Aged Care Workforce - Free Community Training Now Available

Funding is available under the Community Aged Care Workforce Development Program – Specialised Training, to provide 1,000 training places for workers from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background and 1,000 training places for workers from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) background.

The funding available is to provide training in the following nationally-recognised qualifications:

- Certificate III in Home and Community Care;
- Certificate IV in Service Coordination (Ageing and Disability); or
- Certificate IV in Home and Community Care.

and may cover backfilling salary costs for staff attending training.

The target group for training is community care workers from an ATSI or CALD background, who deliver care to recipients of community aged care, EACH and EACH D packages.

Directions Australia has been engaged to deliver this training nationally. An expression of interest form for the Community Aged Care Workforce Development Program – Specialised Training is available by contacting Directions Australia directly on 1300 88 46 55 or via email at [agedcare@directionsaustralia.com.au](mailto:agedcare@directionsaustralia.com.au).

Eligible providers are encouraged to identify staff who would benefit from this training.

If you require further information about this and other community aged care training programs, please contact the Community Aged Care Workforce Program Manager, Judy Stretton on 02 6289 4159 or via email at [community.aged.care.workforce@health.gov.au](mailto:community.aged.care.workforce@health.gov.au).

## Fuel Vouchers for Volunteers

BP Australia has announced a 'Vouchers for Volunteers' initiative which opened on Monday, April 27. Through this scheme BP will be providing \$250,000 in fuel vouchers to volunteers assisting not-for-profit organisations. The scheme is specifically for volunteers.

Applications must be received by 11 May 2009. Further information is available at: [http://www.talkstoppedlongago.com.au/v4v\\_home.html](http://www.talkstoppedlongago.com.au/v4v_home.html).

## International Aged Care Scholarship

Kell and Rigby and St George Corporate & Business Bank are offering a \$20,000 International Aged Care Scholarship for a senior manager in an Australian aged care organisation.

The scholarship provides the opportunity to travel overseas in 2009 -10 to explore and learn about the latest trends and innovations in the provision of aged care services to older persons.

Applications close on 12 June 2009, and all applicants will be advised of success or otherwise by 31 July. The successful applicant will be awarded the scholarship at the Kell and Rigby Building Conference on 7 August 2009 and will be required to give a short presentation.

Other application and selection requirements and criteria are available on the ACSNSW & ACT website: [www.agedservices.asn.au](http://www.agedservices.asn.au).

## **Australasian Journal on Ageing**

The March 2009 issue (Vol 28 Issue 1) of AJA is now available on line and in hard copy for subscribers. AJA is the peer reviewed journal of ACSA, in partnership with the Australian Council on the Ageing, Australian Association of Gerontology and the Australian and New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine.

Articles of particular interest to aged care providers in the latest issue include

- a pilot study of the sitting position's affects on participative interaction of immobile aged care residents
- impact of ageing-in-place policies on structural change in residential aged care, and
- involving older people in community based research- developing a guiding framework for researchers and community organisations.

Subscription details may be found at [www.agedcare.org.au](http://www.agedcare.org.au).

## **Carers Report Released - and Streamed Live - on the Web**

The House of Representatives Family Committee will publicly launch the report of its inquiry into better support for carers at 12 noon on Friday 1 May at Parliament House, Canberra.

“The inquiry has generated tremendous interest, with the Committee receiving over 1300 submissions,” said Committee Chair, Annette Ellis MP. “The vast majority of these submissions have come from individual carers, who with great candour and generosity of spirit have shared their personal stories.”

Copies of the report will be available at the launch, and following the launch from the Committee's webpage at: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/>

## **Health and Community Services Sector Workers' Compensation Claims**

The health and community services sector had the second highest number of serious workers' compensation claims in 2006-07.

The Annual Compendium of Workers' Compensation Statistics shows that only the manufacturing sector had more claims. Over 16,000 serious claims were received from people working in health and community services.

According to the Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC) <http://www.ascc.gov.au> this equates to 15.2 serious claims per 1,000 workers in the sector. There were also five compensated fatalities in the sector during this period.

## New Jobs in Aged and Community Care for Indigenous Workers in Northern Territory

Indigenous workers will fill 319 jobs in the aged and community care sector, through changes to the Community Employment Development Projects (CDEP) program in the Northern Territory announced on 15 April by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin.

The Australian Government – through the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) – is funding these permanent part-time jobs. These jobs comprise:

- 274 positions in Home and Community Care (HACC) Services; and
- 45 positions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care services.

The new permanent part-time jobs in community aged care will make workers eligible for superannuation, ongoing certainty of employment and career progression.

In addition, training for the community aged care positions will be rolled out in partnership with the Northern Territory Government's Department of Health and Families.

## Consumer Directed Care

ACSA CEO Greg Mundy commented in the last National Report (No. 201) on media reports suggesting that Minister Elliot was considering a proposal to improve flexibility in aged care funding. He said 'consumer directed care', where senior citizens are given vouchers to manage how and where they are cared for, was already on the industry's agenda.

ACSA is preparing a statement of principles to guide any consumer directed care programs and will be looking at what existing legislation enables provider to do to improve consumer involvement in service planning and delivery.

Below are reports on a pilot being conducted by one leading aged care group, and a separate organisation advocating for increasing consumer choices.

- **ACH Consumer Directed Pilot Program**

South Australia's ACH Group will give some senior citizens using its home care services more control over how the Federal funding they receive is spent.

The trial would see 20 persons receiving Commonwealth-funded package of care making an informed choice on the services and spending.

The trial will start on July 1 in the north-east region of Adelaide, where ACH offers in-home care services to about 300 seniors.

The decision to trial the process comes amid talk of a radical overhaul of the sector, where the Federal Government is likely to hand over vouchers of up to \$50,000 directly to seniors and their families.

Mr Rungie said the aged care system was not as customer-focused as it can be, but the potential changes "may not be everybody's cup of tea".

The proposal would need a cautious approach, with "no risks to the viability of aged care providers", Mr Rungie said.

## Regular Hand Washing More Important than Isolation in MRSA Control

Regular hand washing by hospital staff and visitors did more to prevent the spread of the MRSA superbug than isolating infected patients, a six year –long study at University College Hospital, London, has shown.

## Ageing Population Data by LGAs

Valuable data on the characteristics of Australia's ageing population is available on the Department of Health and Ageing's website.

Prepared by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the projections show the number of people by age and gender, who are expected to be living in Australia's 70 largest local government areas over the next 20 years.

KPMG demographer Bernard Salt who wrote about the predictions in his column for *The Australian* said it was the first time he had seen this type of data compiled at a national level.

Mr Salt said this type of information could be "extremely valuable" for aged care planning. Click here to see the full population projections.

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

## ITAC 09 - Sustaining Quality Through eCare: 21 & 22 May, Sydney

The topics selected for this year's ITAC have been specifically chosen to address the challenges that aged care providers face over the coming years.

It starts off looking at the global perspective of Aged Care with **Stewart Maxwell's** keynote on the technological challenges facing Aged Care in the near future. From defining the challenge, the program delves into some of the technologies that will help us respond, with **Steve de Laurier** from IBM talking on Open Source and Open Standards. These are two leaders in their fields and will provide an important perspective for the management and support of Aged Care services.

From the keynotes, the program splits into the two sets of concurrent sessions which take delegates across issues such as **total cost of ownership, assistive technologies and medications management.**

Further keynotes throughout the next two days will be delivered by **Silvano Basso** from Auriio Corp, **Allan Turner** from Silver Chain, **Bill Deveny** from Deveny & Associates, **Ross Dawson** from Advanced Human Technologies, **George Margelis**, from Intel, **Kevin Bloch** from Cisco and **Lisa Smith** from NEHTA.

These are all practically focused experts. They will provide the benefit of their extensive industry back grounds, delivering key insights on how to effectively plan and develop your technology strategy to best position your operation for success.

In addition to the presentations, there will be a massive industry expo delivering 46 specialist vendors with unparalleled experience in industry innovations and systems deployments.

Of course you can't ignore the importance of networking and ITAC09 provides a great opportunity to meet other the leaders in Aged Care IT.

You can find out all the conference details on the website at [www.itac09.com.au](http://www.itac09.com.au).

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