

The National Report

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Aged & Community Services Australia



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Vale Warwick Bruen

ACSA wishes to advise its members the sad news of the death of Warwick Bruen on 13 May 2009. Warwick was a strong presence within ageing and aged care. For many years he worked as a senior executive in the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing working on programs such as HACC and the Community Care Review, before acting as a consultant for Alzheimer's Australia.

He has written or contributed to a number of high profile reports and articles on ageing, including 'Aged Care in Australia: Past, Present and Future' published in the Australasian Journal on Ageing, and the 'Consumer Directed Care' Report for Alzheimer's Australia in 2007.

He was a very well respected leader and colleague who was passionate about ageing and aged care issues.

ACSA CEO Greg Mundy commented: "I first met Warwick Bruen when he took over from Jane Halton as the Assistant Secretary, Community Care. I already miss his insight into aged and community care. All who came into contact with Warwick will be saddened by this news."

Warwick leaves behind his wife, Corrinne, and their two loving children, Philip and Michael.

Correction to Budget Edition for Community Care Fees

The percentage amount of the pension able to be paid for community care services, such as CACP, EACH and EACHD, will remain unchanged at 17.5 % not 15% as stated in the budget report.

Budget Reaction

Reactions to the budget from many stakeholders have ranged from disappointment at another lost opportunity, to anger at the Government's failure to come to grips with the fundamental issues facing aged and community care.

ACSA will continue to urge action on the development of a proper index for residential and community care subsidies and on the long-standing issues of capital raising for high care.

“Not addressing this issue in the budget not only threatens the supply of aged care services for an expanding number of people needing care but also fails to take advantage of an opportunity for economic stimulus” ACSA CEO Greg Mundy commented.

“We can only hope that these critical issues are taken up in the Government's response to the most recent Senate Inquiry and in the context of the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission's forthcoming report.”

In terms of practical issues, the Department of Health and Ageing's Andrew Stuart has advised in writing that he is hopeful that the Minister will be able to make an announcement about the annual indexation of subsidies somewhat sooner than in the past, by early rather than late June.

He also advised that the CAP funding will not be rolled into ACFI but will continue to be paid as a separate payment subject to the same eligibility criteria as currently. This policy is unchanged.

Pandemic Alert Raised a Grade

Australia's pandemic alert level has been lifted to CONTAIN in the light of more confirmed cases.

The Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, has stressed that while the official alert level has been raised, there are still only a small number of confirmed cases in Australia, and the symptoms people are experiencing are relatively mild.

Of particular note to aged care providers, staff, residents and families, she has said that one of the most effective ways of protection from the flu (whether seasonal or pandemic) is to practise good personal hygiene. That includes regular washing of hands, covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and staying at least one metre from anyone who is unwell. People who have the flu should not go to work or school or attend other public gatherings.

Pandemic Influenza Business Continuity Plan: A Guide for Aged Care Providers

This ACSA members' only guide has been revised by ACS SA&NT, the original authors, to incorporate latest advice on planning.

It aims to support the aged care industry in their commitment to client care, in making a comprehensive and long-term plan to minimise disruption to services and to protect the health and wellbeing of employees and residents/clients.

The Guide is a 'live' document that will be updated as understanding of Pandemic Influenza and its emergence develops and information becomes available. It is available on www.agedcare.org.au, in the members' only website section.

Award Modernisation

ACSA & ACAA are in the process of preparing a submission to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) on the new draft Nurses and Aged Care Modern Awards.

The key areas to be addressed will be the allowances and conditions, as the rates are generally in line with or below the rates currently paid. ACSA will suggest transitional arrangements over the five years allowed.

The submission will focus primarily on the impact of the awards on residential care as Stage 4 of the AIRC's work will address home care specifically. Stage 4 runs from July through to December and the awards come into operation from January 2010.

ACSA will be preparing a submission on issues critical to the community care sector by 10 July. Preliminary costings appear to indicate that community care will be adversely affected by some of the proposed provisions. Members are encouraged to liaise with their State Associations about what they see as critical issues to ensure that our submission is as comprehensive as possible.

The submission will be on the ACSA website from next week. www.agedcare.org.au

Older Homeless People

The Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot has announced the recognition of homeless people, or those at risk of becoming homeless, as a 'special needs' group under the Aged Care Principles.

In addition to this, the Government is also responding to the special needs of homeless older Australians by:

- Allocating aged care places in future Aged Care Approval Rounds – to allow aged providers with a proven track record in the field of homeless older people to apply for specific beds; and
- Providing capital funds for at least one new specialist facility for homeless older people a year for the next four years to 2012.

Legislation

\$600 Carer Supplement Legislation

Around 500,000 carers across Australia will receive a new, permanent Carer Supplement of \$600 a year following the passage in Parliament on 14 May of the *Social Security and Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (2009 Budget Measures) Bill 2009*. This supplement will provide carers with better financial security by replacing ad-hoc bonuses with a legislated annual supplement. The \$600 supplement will be paid to people who receive:

- Carer Payment
- both Wife Pension and Carer Allowance
- both Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Partner Service Pension and Carer Allowance
- DVA Carer Service pension

The new Supplement will also be provided to around 450,000 recipients of Carer Allowance with \$600 for each person for whom they care. Recipients of both Carer Payment and Carer Allowance will receive two Carer Supplement payments worth \$1200 in total. The first Carer Supplement will be paid by the end of June, and then every year from 1 July 2010.

Health Workforce Australia Bill 2009

This bill, introduced into the House of Representatives on 13 May, establishes Health Workforce Australia (HWA), which will be responsible for implementing the majority of initiatives under the COAG workforce package.

HWA will establish more effective, streamlined and integrated clinical training arrangements and support workforce policy and planning. It's responsibilities will include funding, planning and coordinating pre-professional entry clinical training across all health disciplines; supporting health workforce research and planning, including through a national workforce planning statistical resource, and funding simulation training.

Surveys and Offers

Solar Offer Closes on 30 June – Assistance Available for Retirement Villages & ILU's.

The Federal Government's Solar Homes and Communities Plan rebate closes 30 June. Nearly 3000 applications per week are being made for the \$390 million available as rebates, valued at up to \$9,000, to all Australians to install solar electricity panels

To help ILUs and residents, Villages.com.au, which produces a weekly online newsletter, has established a Sanctuary Energy/villages.com.au program which can provide free solar installation.

Villages that wish to participate can receive by courier a box of preprinted application forms and explanation notes, by emailing <mailto:meganm@villages.com.au>, with the number of ILU's in their village and contact details.

Over the past two weeks approximately 5,000 village residents' application forms have been completed. Villages.com.au is also processing applications for village managers and families of residents who will receive the benefit of the bulk purchasing pricing being offered.

Where possible, presentations are being made to the residents of villages by Sanctuary Energy and villages.com.au. If this is required, again contact meganm@villages.com.au.

Joanna Briggs Survey on Evidence Based Aged Care Content

Aged care providers are invited to contribute (and be remunerated for their contribution) to Evidence Based Aged Care Content being prepared for the Joanna Briggs Institute's JBI-CONNECT

The JBI is an International not-for-profit Research and Development Organisation specialising in evidence-based tools for healthcare professionals, including those in aged care.

It has recently begun an outsourcing project to ensure its information resources are kept up-to-date. It has over 54 centres and groups, servicing over 90 countries, providing high quality, peer reviewed content. In expanding its content development program it is recruiting individuals who are interested in participating in this effort.

Those working on this project will be supported by a research fellow at JBI in Adelaide who will answer any questions or discuss any issues arising.

Those interested in becoming a JBI Reviewer, should go to: www.joannabriggs.edu.au/about/reviewers.php for more information, particularly at the contributor's handbook and the JBI-COnNECT contributor agreement.

Best Workplaces in Aged Care Survey.

The aged care bimonthly magazine *INsite* is supporting a new initiative from an independent organisation, JRA, to launch the *Best Workplaces in Aged Care Survey*. JRA runs the leading employee engagement survey in New Zealand which is at <http://www.jra.co.nz/bestworkplaces>.

ACSA has agreed to pass on details of the project so that facilities can decide for themselves whether or not to participate.

The details of the survey are available online at www.jraaustralia.com.au/bestworkplaces/agedcare/.

Vote for Australia's Favourite Home - a Retirement Village?

ACS NSW&ACT member Goodwin Village's award-winning Ainslie apartments in Canberra have been nominated as Australia's best apartment or townhouse complex of the year.

The Housing Industry Association and realestate.com.au have launched *Australia's Favourite Home* - an interactive competition aimed at promoting quality and sustainable design.

Goodwin's 68 apartments at Ainslie are four storeys high and are spread across three blocks, giving residents views of the nearby Mount Ainslie and Canberra's city centre. They were planned as stylish apartments which anyone would want to live in regardless of their age, but with special features that will help older people live independently well into their senior years.

Voting in the competition is open until 7 June. More information at: <http://comps.realestate.com.au/display.php?s=601203b6f83542385>

Resources

Drug Use Evaluation Tools

Two new Drug Use Evaluation (DUE) tools for optimal drug therapy relating to laxative use, and hypnotics have been developed by the [National Prescribing Service Ltd](http://www.nps.gov.au) (NPS) to assist health professionals working in aged care facilities.

The NPS DUE toolkits provide localised activities to compare current drug use against best practice and guide health professionals in their decision making to achieve the best outcomes for patients.

Laxatives are one of the most frequently used medicines in long term aged care facilities; up to half of nursing home residents have reported experiencing constipation and 74% are receiving at least one laxative preparation.

Audit Toolkit for Clinical Handovers

GP Partners in Brisbane has released an audit toolkit to promote more effective clinical handovers for aged care residents who transfer into hospital.

The kit was developed after a study of transfers between aged care facilities and the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital found room for improvement and identified a number of ways in which providers and hospitals could work more intelligently.

The study recommends that aged care facilities keep comprehensive medical assessments in a prominent place on residents' files, along with their GP's contact details.

The report or the audit toolkit is available at: www.gppartners.com.au/page/About_Us/Publications

Awards

ACSA Recognised and Rewarded

The Myer Foundation and Sidney Myer Fund's 2009 Commemorative Grants Program lists ACSA as one of 37 organisations recognised as a partner in their philanthropic investment for strong community organisations. The 2009 program has given ACSA and the others each an unsolicited \$100,000 grant, with few constraints on how it is to be used.

The program recognises and celebrates the trust and mutual vision shared by grant makers and grant recipients. The grant recipients will be required to use the grant on reviewing their organisational strength and building long term viability. They will also participate in a research program in which the wider issue of organisational capacity building will be studied.

IT in Aged Care Industry Awards

These awards were presented at the recent Information Technology in Aged Care (ITAC) Conference, held in Sydney on 21-22 May. Winners were:

eIT in Aged Care Company of the Year award: *iCare*, an Australian based company that has successfully taken its locally developed clinical care and medication management software to the UK aged care market.

Software implementation in facilities of fewer than 150 beds: *Cedar Place*, Kempsey, NSW. The successful implementation of the *iCare* software QM package has transformed the way staff operate, saving time and money and reducing staff turnover.

Software implementation in facilities of more than 150 beds: *Barwon Health*, a Victorian based regional healthcare provider of acute, sub acute, palliative care and residential care services across the Geelong region. Their new technology has slashed thousands of hours off the time spent entering and storing resident and patient health records.

The awards are run under the auspices of ACAA, ACSA (Aged Care Association Australia (ACAA)) and HISA (The Health Informatics Society of Australia.)

International Aged Care Scholarship Closes Soon

Applications for the Kell and Rigby and St George Corporate & Business Bank \$20,000 International Aged Care Scholarship for a senior manager in an Australian aged care organisation, closes on 12 June, 2009.

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.

Application, selection requirements and criteria are available on the ACSNSW &ACT website: www.agedservices.asn.au.

Research, Publications and Reports

Our Homes, Our Communities: The Aspirations and Expectations of Older People in South Australia.

South Australian provider ECH, has released the research it commissioned from Flinders University on what sort of housing older Australians want. Over 1200 people participated. The research summarises the 'ideal' purpose-built aged housing as:

- Groups of 10 or fewer single-storey dwellings with two bedrooms and larger, more spacious rooms;
- Located within the broader community, rather than confined to estates;
- Close to local neighbourhoods in order to stay connected with friends, family, healthcare; professionals, service providers and importantly, public transport ;
- Enabling independent living for as long as possible; and
- Offering a range of tenure and pricing arrangements to cater for lower income retirees. This may range from rental, purchase, a 'donation' model and other variants.

The report is on the ECH web site: www.ech.asn.au

Person-controlled Electronic Health Records - Supplementary Paper - National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner has commented on this NHHRC Supplementary Paper. The Office suggests there are some key issues which require further consideration. They include the:

1. Implications of the proposal that consumers would be able to add information to their own person-controlled e-health record. System controls will be needed to ensure that health providers know who has entered each piece of information, and that information entered by another provider has not been altered by the consumer;
2. Areas that are to be covered in legislation, including safeguards to ensure that consumer access to health services, Medicare or health insurance payments is not adversely affected by the e-health system;
3. Processes for complaint handling and audit;
4. Capacity of consumers to control access to information which they regard as particularly sensitive;
5. Secondary uses of information; and
6. Implications of the approach for equity and participation of disadvantaged consumers.

The NHHRC supplementary paper, Person-controlled Electronic Health Records, is available on the NHHRC website at www.nhhrc.org.au under Interim Report of the NHHRC. www.privacy.gov.au

ACS NSW & ACT ACFI Survey

The Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI) has helped draw attention to depression in residential aged care but staff members still need more training on how to use the Cornell Scale for Depression (CSD).

A survey conducted by the Aged & Community Services NSW & ACT (ACS) and completed by 97 members earlier this year, suggests that since the introduction of the new tool in March 2008, the number of residents being screened for depression has increased.

ACS CEO, Jill Pretty said that before the ACFI was introduced, 63.5 per cent of respondents regularly screened residents for depression but this figure rose to 80 per cent after the tool came into effect.

But some staff members are having trouble coming to grips with the prescribed tool for assessing depression. Among the concerns of staff were the length of the scale, difficulties getting GPs to address their concerns and the scarcity of interpreters.

On the upside, the survey suggests that the widespread use of the CSD has led to a more active treatment of depression and greater engagement with mental health teams.

“I think it has raised staff awareness of depression and there is increased interest in the area,” Ms Pretty said.

“But they need the support to apply the tool and that’s where the focus should be now.”

Data obtained from the Department of Health and Ageing showed that 17 per cent of the 125,000 residents appraised before March 2009 were classified as ‘C’ or ‘D’ - the two highest ratings.

Supporting Families and Friends of Older People Living in Residential Aged Care

The Australian Centre for Evidence Based Aged Care has published this nine page booklet to assist family carers. Its contents are based on the findings of an evidence-based systematic review that identified factors associated with constructive nursing staff-family relationships. Copies are available in pdf form, or in printed form (at \$10 a copy) from s.nugent@latrobe.edu.au.

ACSA’s own *In Their Shoes*, for residential care workers, and *In Their Homes*, for home care workers, are still available and order forms and other details are on the website at www.agedcare.org.au, then go to Publications.

Health Concerns for Ageing Population

Older, obese and low-income Australians are more likely to suffer from chronic disease now than they were 15 years ago, a new study has found.

University of Adelaide researchers have compared data from two Australian national health surveys, one taken in 1989/90 and one in 2004/05. They found that diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure had escalated among the old, the obese and low income earners.

Evan Atlantis, from the university's school of medicine, presented the research findings to a recent Heart Foundation conference in Brisbane.

Guidelines for Preventive Health Activities in Australia

This is the 7th edition of the 'red book' published by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. It is available in print format and on line at www.racgp.org.au/guidelines/redbook.

Conferences

Kell & Rigby Building Conference: Sydney 7 August 2009

This conference will have the theme *Who Drives the Aged Care Model?* It is endorsed by ACS NSW & ACT and ACAA NSW. Details from <mailto:nikki.ward@kellrigby.com>

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