

# *The National Report*

**13 August, 2009 – Issue 209**  
**Aged & Community Services Australia**



## Contents

ACSA Elder Abuse Survey – Urgent Response Requested

National Reform Agenda

Aged Care Cost Implications in NHHRC Changes

Ageing and Aged Care as Political Issues

ACSA National Conference – We Lose One VIP but Gain Another

Special Offer for Rural, Remote (including Indigenous) Services

Change of Direction with ACSA e-Learning

Government Funding Announcements

- Support for Older People from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds
- Chronic Disease Funding
- Veterans' Support
- Homelessness Research

Microsoft's Licensing Changes

National End of Life Framework for the Future

Veterans' Home Care

UN Disabilities Convention Optional Protocol

Coalition Launches 'Engaging With Senior Australians' Initiative

Tony Abbott's Plan for Hospitals has Aged Care Link

Building Regional Opportunities, Leveraging from Graduates in Australia (Brolga)

Government Issues Mobility Scooter Warning

More Consultation and Surveys – Participation Wanted

- Government and the Third Sector Community Consultation
- Special Disability Trust

Publications, Research and Reports

Telecare Innovations

National Code of Conduct for Medical Practice

## **ACSA Elder Abuse Survey - Urgent Response Requested**

ACSA is conducting an on-line survey about the experience of residential aged care providers with the compulsory reporting regime for alleged physical and sexual assaults of aged care residents.

The results will be used by ACSA and its State Associations to lobby governments for improvements to the protection of vulnerable older people, and will be presented at the 2009 ACSA National Conference.

We would appreciate it if you could complete the questionnaire **by Friday 28 August**.

Survey Monkey makes it easy for you, and for us. **Just click on the link below** and it brings up our survey; when you've completed it, click on 'Done' and your responses are returned to us.

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=FG9PIRIVntui8F9\\_2bTxo49w\\_3d\\_3d](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=FG9PIRIVntui8F9_2bTxo49w_3d_3d)

## National Reform Agenda

The Government has been at pains to state its commitment to consultation with the aged care sector and not just hospitals about the health reform agenda. ACSA CEO Greg Mundy has had preliminary discussions with the government about the consultation process.

In a speech to the Committee for the Economic Development of Australia last week, Minister Elliot echoed the Prime Minister's linking of health reform, the Henry review of taxation and the next Intergenerational Report. She stated that as this stage, no options or proposals were being ruled in or out, and also her commitment to discuss the issues with our sector.

ACSA will be seeking the views of members on the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission's (NHHRC) recommendations so that they can be presented to government. As foreshadowed in the last National Report, ACSA has written to the Government pointing out the deficiencies in the 2003 calculation used by Hogan of a possible 17% efficiency dividend, and the dangers of relying on this (six year old) figure.

*The NHHRC report is available online at: <http://www.nhhrc.org.au/>*

## Aged Care Cost Implications in NHHRC Changes

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has released expenditure estimates on some of the NHHRC's recommendations including aged care.

The AIHW's projection model placed no limit on the number of aged care places. It assumed that places would increase according to need and demography. The model's expenditure estimates implied an increase in the number of high care places between 2012/13 and 2022/23 of 38% and an increase between 2022/23 and 2032/33 of 44%.

The NHHRC recommends that the allocation of subsidised residential aged care and other aged care places increases proportionally with the growth in the population 85 years and over. This would increase the number of funded places by about 37% from 2012/13 to 2022/23 and by about 51% from 2022/23 to 2032/33.

The NHHRC proposal would save some expenditure as compared to the health and aged care projection model in the period 2012/13 to 2022/23 as the growth for funded places under the NHHRC proposal would be less than the projection model.

However for the period 2022/23 to 2032/33 the NHHRC proposal would result in more allocation to residential aged care expenditure than the expenditure projection model estimates. This extra allocation to residential aged care will not necessarily be completely used, so the estimated higher cost of the NHHRC proposals of \$1.4 billion in 2032/33 is an upper limit.

In 2022/23 the annual savings of the NHHRC proposals would be \$519 million, but by 2032/33, the NHHRC proposals would be costing \$1.4 billion more than the projection model estimates, assuming that the extra allocation to residential aged care expenditure implied by the NHHRC proposals is used.

To access the AIHW estimates go to: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10932>

## Ageing and Aged Care as Political Issues

A regular on-line polling blog, *Pollytics*, has reported some responses on aged care in its 11 August report.

Questions on aged care and pensions as an issue showed that both rated highly amongst all groups. However people aged 55 years and over were more likely than those aged 18-24 years to rate aged care as 'very important' ( 99% v 86%).

When asked to rate the performance of the Federal Government on this issue, respondents aged 45-54 were more likely than those in other groups to rate the government's performance as poor/very poor (51%). The negative response for all groups was 58%.

*Pollytics* polling blog can be viewed at:

<http://blogs.crikey.com.au/pollytics?s=%27aged+care%27>

## ACSA National Conference - We Lose One VIP but Gain Another

We have just been advised that Ms Kirsty Sword Gusmao is not able to participate as planned in the forthcoming ACSA 2009 National Conference on Monday 14 September, due to her revised official State duties scheduled in the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste on that date.

Her personal assistant has advised that "Whilst State duties will always take priority... this decision was not taken without a great deal of consideration given the enormous amount of work invested to date and the inconvenience that this may cause." Ms Kirsty Sword Gusmao has asked that we convey her most sincere apologies to the delegates and guests of Aged and Community Services Australia and humbly seeks their understanding.

However we have been able to replace her with an equally inspiring speaker: The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG.

Michael Kirby was, until February 2009, Australia's longest serving judge, and a Justice of the High Court of Australia. Before that, he had served on the Arbitration Commission, the Law Reform Commission, the Federal Court, the NSW Court of Appeal and the Court of Appeal of Solomon Islands.

He has also served in many international activities of UNESCO, the ILO, WHO, UNAIDS, UNDP and the Commonwealth Secretariat. He was, in the 1990s, President of the International Commission of Jurists and UN Special Representative for Human Rights in Cambodia.

In the High Court, Michael Kirby was sometimes described as "the great dissenter". However, his life has involved him in the activities of many non-governmental organisations. He knows how important community services are and how vital it is to tackle inequality in our society. In its treatment of Aboriginals, Asians, women, gays, prisoners, the aged and their carers, refugees and other vulnerable groups, Australia has an improving, but still not perfect, track record.

Michael Kirby will speak of the importance of dissent in society. Given the big changes that have happened in our lifetimes, Michael Kirby will urge us all to stand up and be counted. And to speak up for the rights of all people and groups so that no-one is left out of the Australian Commonwealth.

For full information and a Conference registration brochure go to: [www.acsa2009.com.au](http://www.acsa2009.com.au)

## Special Offer for Rural, Remote (including Indigenous) Services

Don't forget this special Conference offer of one free registration, dinner ticket, airfare and accommodation as a sponsored delegate, with the support of Southern Cross Care NSW and ACT.

Just tell ACSA why you want to attend the conference and what you will do with the knowledge and networks you gain from attending.

The winner will also be invited to write about their service and its challenges in the Summer 09 edition of *Agendas*.

**Applications close at on 21 August**, and the winner will be advised on 23 August.

The full details are attached to the end of this report or can be accessed at [www.agedcare.org.au](http://www.agedcare.org.au)

## Change of Direction with ACSA e-Learning

Since 2003 ACSA has been offering online training in conjunction with *Learning Seat*. Last year ACSA undertook a project funded by the Australian Flexible Learning Framework to develop an aged care industry plan to help us embed e-learning further into our industry. Through this project we reviewed what we were currently doing and have decided to adopt different approaches, including purchasing a national licence for Elluminate, a virtual classroom.

Our decision to discontinue the *Learning Seat* service in no way reflects on the quality of the courses they provide. Rather it is a shift in strategic direction for our industry. We firmly believe e-learning has an integral role to play in education and training within the aged care industry.

ACSA's highest priority is to ensure our on-line students are not disadvantaged and are able to complete any courses without undue hardship. All enrollees who have not completed on-line courses will receive an e-mail shortly advising them of ACSA's decision and the need to complete courses by 20 November 2009.

Short courses will still be available on-line through the ACSA website until 13 September 2009, but they must be completed by 20<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

Certificate and other longer courses have already been removed from the ACSA e-learning Shopping Cart. Special arrangements will be made for anyone partway through a Certificate course, to enable them to complete their studies.

*If anyone has queries or concerns, they can ring Mary Chan at ACSA on 03 9686 3460.*

## Government Funding Announcements

### **Support for Older People from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds**

Minister Elliot has announced more than \$15.6 million to fund 77 projects to help older culturally and linguistically diverse people access aged care services.

The \$15.6 million over three years is being funded under the Community Partners Program (CPP) which brings together older people and their carers from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, connecting them with aged care information and service providers.

The 2006 Census reported that almost a quarter of Australian residents (22%) were born overseas.

### **Chronic Disease Funding**

The Rudd Government has approved the allocation of a total of \$13.1 million to 82 organisations to deliver specific chronic disease self-management and lifestyle risk modification programs in communities and regions throughout Australia.

Funding recipient, National Ageing Research Institute, are to develop and evaluate a 'Positive Ageing' self-management program aimed at people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds at risk of developing chronic disease.

### **Veterans' support**

The Department of Veterans Affairs will provide \$4 million to help veterans and their families to access entitlements and to connect with government and community services and will review the funding program.

The funding will be distributed to almost 200 ex-services organisations across the country as part of the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) grant program.

Veterans' Affairs Minister, Alan Griffin, also announced a review of the BEST program, which will include writing to all the organisations that applied for this funding.

### **Homelessness Research**

Minister for Housing, Tanya Plibersek announced on 6 August that \$11.4 million over four years will be allocated for new research to direct the Rudd Government's efforts to reduce homelessness in Australia.

The new Homelessness Research Agenda will increase the evidence base around homelessness and support the implementation of the Government's White Paper on Homelessness.

## Microsoft's Licensing Changes

Microsoft has released its new criteria for charitable licences for aged care providers. Under the new arrangements, aged care providers will only be able to purchase the charitable licences if they meet a certain criteria and run a facility with a maximum of 60 beds.

In a survey of providers by KM Group, which was reported in *Australian Ageing Agenda* online, 45.5% of participants said they would delay existing and planned IT spending. A further 13.4% of participants in the survey said they would stall IT investment until viable alternatives were found.

*The new criteria are at:*

<http://www.microsoft.com/australia/licensing/byname/charitiesopen.msp>

## National End of Life Framework for the Future

Palliative Care Australia (PCA) is planning a national forum to oversee the development of a National End of Life Framework for the Future.

PCA chief executive officer, Donna Daniell, said “a comprehensive framework to guide system development is critical given the numerous reform processes, redesign initiatives and strategy development, currently underway across the health and community care sectors.”

“The forum will bring together experts in aged, primary, chronic illness and palliative care, service delivery and development, and quality. It will commence a national conversation with all key stakeholders, including patients and their families,” she said.

The national forum is planned for August 2009.

*Details will be provided at: [www.palliativecare.org.au](http://www.palliativecare.org.au)*

## Veterans' Home Care

The Department of Veterans' Affairs advised on July 17 its intention to exercise its option to extend current *Deeds of Standing Offer* (contracts) between the Department of Veterans' Affairs and Veterans' Home Care (VHC) assessment agencies and service providers beyond their expiry on November 30, 2009 for a period of two years.

Formal letters exercising this option and offering an extension of current contracts have now been sent to all provider organisations.

*For further details please contact the VHC Contract Support team on 1300 550 466 or email: [VHCcontractsupp@dva.gov.au](mailto:VHCcontractsupp@dva.gov.au).*

## UN Disabilities Convention Optional Protocol

Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, and Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, Bill Shorten, announced on 3 August that Australia will accede to the optional protocol on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The protocol provides a mechanism for Australians to make complaints to the United Nations Disabilities Committee in the event that all domestic remedies have been exhausted.

## Coalition Launches 'Engaging With Senior Australians' Initiative

The Leader of the Opposition, Malcolm Turnbull, and Shadow Minister for Ageing, Margaret May, on 3 August launched the Federal Coalition's 'Engaging with Senior Australians' initiative.

As part of the Coalition's *Engaging with Senior Australians* initiative, the Federal Coalition will be hosting Seniors Forums around the country to hear from senior Australians. “We particularly encourage input from senior Australians on delivering world-class aged care services, aged pensions, social inclusion, health services and retirement incomes.” Mr Turnbull said.

*The Coalition has also launched a webpage inviting senior Australians to submit their ideas at: [www.liberal.org.au/seniors](http://www.liberal.org.au/seniors).*

## Tony Abbott's Plan for Hospitals has Aged Care Link

Opposition frontbencher Tony Abbott has said that a Coalition Government would devolve the running of the nation's public hospitals to the private sector, community groups and charities. "We wouldn't run them with public servants," he told the Ten Network on Sunday 2 August. Mr Abbott, a health minister in the previous Howard coalition government, said it was time to give the public hospital system back to the people. His vision includes the establishment of local hospital boards with the power to appoint their own chief executive and the ability to retain revenue from privately-insured patients.

"It is a dog's breakfast of divided responsibility," Mr Abbott said of the present system where the states blamed the Commonwealth for lack of funding. The Commonwealth, under a coalition government, would devolve management of public hospitals in the same the way it did for the employment services network and nursing homes.

## Building Regional Opportunities, Leveraging from Graduates in Australia (Brolga)

The *Brolga Project* places final-year university students into short-term work experience positions with rural and regional host agencies; businesses, government departments and non-profit organisations.

Its goal is to provide an opportunity for urban-orientated students to try life 'in the country' for a short period of time as part of their studies. Hopefully many will enjoy the experience enough to return to the regional or rural community when they've completed their degree.

The *Brolga Project* is looking for more host agencies to offer student placements. Placements may be as short as a week of unpaid experience, or as long as four months paid, each placement is unique and is negotiated via internet teleconference after an initial introduction.

There's enormous scope within the project, for example non-profit organisations could use an IT student to streamline on-line programs.

*Host agencies interested in finding out more about the project are encouraged to contact the office or complete an online Expression of Interest, available at: [www.brolgaproject.com.au](http://www.brolgaproject.com.au)*

## Government Issues Mobility Scooter Warning

The federal Minister for Consumer Affairs, Dr Craig Emerson, has issued a warning to users of mobility scooters, after receiving advice from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

Mr Emerson said scooter accidents have led to 71 deaths in Australia since July 2000.

"While mobility scooters allow people with limited ability to maintain active, independent lifestyles these injury statistics are alarming," Dr Emerson said.

“The ACCC will invite a number of key stakeholders to form a reference group to develop a joint national approach to problems involving motorised mobility scooters,” he said.

Dr Emerson said scooter users should ensure they have the physical and cognitive ability to drive them. He also said they should stick to a limit of 10km/h and slow down when they are close to pedestrians and cyclists.

## More Consultation and Surveys - Participation Wanted

### **Government and the Third Sector Community Consultations**

The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector, Senator Ursula Stephens, on 3 August launched the second stage of consultations as part of the development of a national compact between the two sectors.

Stakeholders can register online to be involved in the latest consultations through an online forum. The second stage of consultations will build on feedback provided from consultations held late last year and recent work carried out by a joint sector and government compact taskforce.

*For more information or to register your interest in the online consultation forum, please visit: [www.socialinclusion.gov.au/forums](http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/forums) or call 1800 607 839.*

### **Special Disability Trust**

The Government is seeking feedback and comments on the legislative design details of the Government’s 2009-10 Budget announcement to change the tax arrangements applying to special disability trusts. In particular, comment is sought on any potential unexpected consequences for beneficiaries of special disability trusts.

*The proposed approach to the legislative changes is outlined in a consultation paper at: [http://www.treasury.gov.au/documents/1567/PDF/consultation\\_paper.pdf](http://www.treasury.gov.au/documents/1567/PDF/consultation_paper.pdf)*

## Publications, Research and Reports

### **Residential Aged Care Coronial Communiqué.**

The 10th edition of the Residential Aged Care Coronial Communiqué is now available. The focus of this issue is to consolidate the learning from the previous four clinical topics covered: wound care; diabetes mellitus; warfarin and pneumonia.

*The Coronial Communiqué can be found on the website at: <http://www.vifm.org/n961.html>*

### **Experience Works: The Mature Age Employment Challenge**

This report has been released by the National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre. It gives a snapshot of mature age employment in Australia, outlines the distinctive barriers faced by older workers, and draws on overseas approaches that hold lessons for Australia. It also presents potential policy responses.

*The report can be accessed at: [www.productiveageing.com.au](http://www.productiveageing.com.au)*

## **Managing in a Downturn**

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), the Fundraising Institute Australia and the Centre for Social Impact collaborated in this comprehensive survey of the impact of the economic downturn on not-for-profit organisations (NFPs). The survey was conducted in April and May 2009 and draws upon a similar survey conducted by PwC in the UK last year. Questions focus on the impact in the last six months, as well as the anticipated future impact over the next year. In total, 263 NFPs responded.

*An online version of this report, along with further detailed analysis can be found at one of the following websites: [www.pwc.com.au/foundation](http://www.pwc.com.au/foundation) or [www.fia.org.au](http://www.fia.org.au)*

This report aims to bring some much needed rigorous research and insight into how participants in the not-for-profit sector have been impacted by the downturn, the extent to which their revenue sources have been affected and their responses to the resulting challenges.

Sadly, it reveals a sector already under stress and expecting conditions to get worse. This is consistent with what we know to be happening overseas. The challenge now is how all stakeholders respond.

Key findings are:

- Incomes are declining, especially investment incomes, with only government funding remaining quite stable. The decline is expected to continue over the next 12 months.
- Expenses look set to increase - two-thirds of respondents expect an increase in operational costs over the next year. NFPs will either need to rely upon reserves or find efficiencies in order to maintain service levels.
- Most NFPs are taking direct action to combat the effects of the downturn. The preferred option for most NFPs is increasing fundraising activities, with a particular focus on growing government income. Half of the NFPs responding to this survey expect to increase their volunteers and many are planning specific initiatives to attract and retain them. Marketing and brand awareness is also a major focus.
- 30% of NFPs have already implemented cost reduction measures, and more are planning cost reductions in the next year. The top three planned cost reductions are staff recruitment, IT projects and consulting services.
- Most NFPs feel they have adequate systems in place for budgeting and planning, but many are planning to increase their commitment to strategic planning and management. Areas of focus include proactive detailed scenario planning, detailed activity-based budgets and management accounts, and board and trustee involvement.
- Large organisations are faring better - revenues have declined less, they typically have larger accumulated reserves and have been more proactive in introducing measures to deal with the economic downturn.

## **Shut out: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia**

This National Disability Strategy Consultation Report has been prepared and released by the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council.

*For more details and to download a copy go to*

*[http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/news/2009/Pages/NDS\\_consultations.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/news/2009/Pages/NDS_consultations.aspx)*

### **Not Enough Food for Low Care Residents?**

The Sydney Morning Herald on 12 August has reported a Monash University study which shows that elderly men living in aged-care hostels are not served enough at meal times, allegedly on the grounds of food costs.

In a study of 14 hostels, researchers said the serves were too small for most men, none included enough vegetables, 65% of residents showed signs of under-nutrition and a third were not being fed enough protein, which is vital for muscle and brain cell maintenance.

Their intake of calcium, magnesium, folate, zinc and fibre was also too low and most meals contained too much saturated fat.

Ms Julie Woods, a lecturer in nutrition and dietetics, said 103 residents were studied and only 11 showed no signs of under-nutrition.

The study will be published in the *Journal of Nutrition, Health and Aging*.

### **Consumer Group Targets Elderly Medicine Habits**

Consumer group *Choice* has called for widespread reforms to help patients, doctors and pharmacists reduce the risk – especially to the elderly – of mixing their medicines, with the average number of daily drug doses per person doubling in 20 years.

It's now estimated that 40% of Australian aged 65 or over are taking five or more medications, increasing the risks of side effects and interactions of medicines including over-the-counter treatments such as aspirin and St John's wort.

Research also shows many of the elderly are taking unnecessary medicines and are even 'doubling up' on some through having different doctors. There are also issues with under-medication due to confusion, neglect and cost.

Adverse drug events account for more than 140,000 hospital admissions a year, at a cost of \$380 million, and it's estimated that about half of these are avoidable.

The most commonly implicated drugs are cardiovascular medicines, anticoagulants, anti-inflammatories and chemotherapy medicines.

*Further information is available at:*

<http://www.choice.com.au/viewPressRelease.aspx?id=106993&catId=100585&tid=100010&p=1>

### **Advance Care Directives in Aged Care**

The DLA Phillips Fox Health Alert of 3 August has reported on a recent NSW case: *Hunter and New England Area Health Service v A* [2009] NSWSC 761

This case involved an application from the Hunter New England Area Health Service (the Service) seeking a declaration as to the validity of an 'Advance Care Directive' (the directive) given by Mr A a year earlier which indicated that he would refuse dialysis. Medical opinion suggested that not performing dialysis on Mr A in the present circumstances would result in his death.

The question was therefore whether a capable adult has the right to refuse medical treatment. The Court weighed a competent adult's right of autonomy with the competing interest of the State in protecting and preserving the lives and health of its citizens and found that whenever there is a conflict between the two, the right of the individual must prevail.

The Court found that it is not necessary that the person was informed of the consequence of refusing specified kinds of treatment for the directive to be valid. Nor does it matter if the person's decision is based on religious, social or moral grounds. It is sufficient that the directive is made voluntarily by a capable adult and in the absence of any vitiating factor.

The Court made a declaration that the directive was valid, but commended the Service for taking steps to preserve Mr A's life whilst seeking the Court's decision.

*Full details can be found at:*

<http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/scjudgments/2009nswsc.nsf/6ccf7431c546464bca2570e6001a45d2/48dd2b1db7c8987dca257608000a28da?OpenDocument>

## Telecare Innovations

In the United Kingdom, telecare is increasingly being used as part of the social care systems, with alarms being offered to 33,000 Essex residents aged 85 and over to support independence and improve quality of life.

Essex County Council is investing £4 million in telecare systems and support from Tunstall (which also operates in Australia), which will be available to new telecare applicants who are over 85, as part of the council's vision to deliver the best quality of life in Britain.

An evaluation of 240 telecare users in Essex demonstrated significant cost benefits, with savings of £3.58 made for every £1 invested into telecare.

Essex County Council's investment into telecare reflects the government's commitment to provide health and social care services closer to people's homes, and to deliver more personalised care within the community setting.

Essex County Council currently uses intelligent telecare solutions from Tunstall Healthcare which are linked to a 24 hour response centre that supports an estimated 8,000 people.

*To find out more about Tunstall telecare visit: [www.tunstallhealthcare.com.au](http://www.tunstallhealthcare.com.au) or call 1300 760 333.*

## National Code of Conduct for Medical Practice

The Australian Medical Council (AMC) Directors have developed and endorsed *Good Medical Practice: A Code of Conduct for Doctors in Australia* on behalf of all state and territory medical registration boards. It defines clear, nationally consistent standards of medical practice.

The Code has been recommended to individual state and territory medical boards, ahead of the introduction of national medical registration in mid-2010.

The AMC has recommended that the Code will benefit from a regular, three to five year review cycle, to ensure its ongoing relevance and currency.

The code has been supported by the AMA and the Consumers Health Forum of Australia.

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