



National Aged Care Industry Council



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CRUCIAL DECISIONS TO SUPPORT AN AGEING AUSTRALIA

Today's crisis in the aged care workforce is tomorrow's catastrophe in hospital and health services, according to aged care leaders in a summit in Canberra today looking at the future of aged and community care.

The summit called for an increase in funding and significant changes to policy development in order to avoid this happening.

The National Aged Care Industry Council (NACIC) which represents the major aged and community care organisations in Australia has released a communiqué outlining the major and immediate funding and policy action now required to maintain and develop aged and community care services.

The 55 delegates who contributed to the communiqué are leaders in aged and community care services and leading consumer representatives in Australia. They were informed by their own experiences, and papers from Professor Warren Hogan, who conducted the Government's 2004 Pricing Review into aged care; David Armstrong from the Amity Group, part of DCA Group Ltd- Australia's largest private operator; Ross Bradshaw, Chief Executive of Silver Chain in WA; and Felicity Barr, who presented research on consumer needs and preferences.

The forum members insisted that aged and community care must remain on the political agenda, despite the lack of attention paid to it by the Government and Opposition. The 2006-07 budget announcements and Opposition response did not address the major issues facing the industry.

The Government has not yet acted on Hogan's major long term proposals on funding issues, despite his report being available for the last three budgets. Continued inaction will result in this country failing older Australians.

The limitations to the Government's interim funding changes, announced in 2004, were becoming apparent, and if not addressed as soon as possible, will result in a generation of older Australians being left without appropriate care.

The major recommendations in the communiqué are:

- The skills shortage must be addressed for these vital services. Funding needs to match the real costs of providing quality care.
- Workforce reform and funding for education and training, including use of technology, in aged and community care to ensure a workforce to enable effective choice and supply of services and care.
- Pricing flexibility including the separation of accommodation and care costs and funding to enable clients to access a range of services - as their needs change. Services should have different prices to meet different consumer needs and preferences.
- Linkages with other services need improvement including through effective case management.
- Greater consumer choice through a number of options- between residential and community care. This should include a pilot consumer-directed care (or 'voucher') scheme to ensure it can provide acceptable structures and outcomes such as quality, duty of care, responsibility, prevention of abuse and inclusion of family carers.
- New funding models and adequate resources are needed to ensure the viability of rural and remote care services - without this many services will disappear. This is also required to effectively meet the needs of special needs groups such as indigenous and young people in care.
- Drastic streamlining of regulation in aged and community care is essential to improve the flexibility and efficiency of services.
- A joint industry/government campaign to inform media, public and the corporate sector on the quality, variety, size and importance of aged and community care.

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