

**Aged & Community Services Australia
National Conference , 17-20 September Gold Coast**

MEDIA RELEASE

Community Aged Care Review Welcomed

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ACSA, which represents the largest number of aged and community care services in Australia, today welcomed the announcement by the Minister for Ageing, Senator Santo Santoro, of a review of the Australian Government's Community Aged Care Programs. The Minister made the announcement at ACSA's National Conference at the Gold Coast.

ACSA CEO Greg Mundy said since 2001 ACSA had called for a fundamental review of Australia's complex system of 18 separate community care programs run by the Department of Health and Ageing.

"The current system results in confusion for both those using services (nearly one million frail older people, people with disabilities, and their carers) and for the service providers," Greg Mundy said.

"People miss out on much needed services as a result."

"ACSA has supported the Government's reform strategy for community care, known as 'The Way Forward', released in 2004. This strategy rightly identified some of the key issues such as clarifying eligibility, improving assessment procedures and streamlining accountability processes for providers. But the 2004 strategy fell short of what was needed."

"We particularly welcome the new review's focus of subsidy levels. ACSA has argued for some time that the current system is too inflexible to meet people's changing needs. However it is critical that the review examine the erosion of the value of community care subsidies as costs such as staff wages and petrol have outstripped government indexation rates."

"Any review of community care must also include consideration of the joint Commonwealth/State Home and Community Care (HACC) Program, currently valued at \$1.4 Billion. The new review should involve close consultation with State and Territory Governments and take opportunities to consolidate smaller Australian Government programs with HACC where appropriate."

"ACSA looks forward to working with Minister Santoro and his Department on this new review of community aged care programs. We want a community care system for the future with far fewer holes for people to fall through, realistic levels of funding to meet people's needs, and , hopefully, far fewer separate funding programs, " Greg Mundy concluded.

For further comment contact Greg Mundy on 0416 203 065 or Paul Sadler, Chair of ACSA's National Community Care Committee and CEO of ACS NSW&ACT on 0438 218 003. For general conference information, contact Megan Stoyles 0408147829. Program at www.agedcare.org.au