

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

MEDIA RELEASE

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Aged and health care services the economic lifeblood of rural economies

Aged and Community Services Australia*(ACSA), has called on the Government to boost funding and support for aged and community care services in rural and remote Australia. The boost is needed to ensure that all older Australians and their families living there have access to the same quality and range of services as other Australians.

Greg Mundy, CEO of ACSA said that “as well as care these services provide the economic lifeblood of rural areas due to their employment and purchasing role in the rural economies.”

ACSA has endorsed a report released today (Sunday 17 September) at its National Conference Rural and Remote workshop. The Report quantifies the economic importance of the aged and health sector to the overall economic, employment and population viability of many rural towns and regions.

The report “*The Economic importance of non-hospital health and aged-related community care services to regional communities*” examines the economic contribution made by non-hospital health and aged-related community care services to three regional economies:

- mid north coast region of NSW (Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Clarence and Hastings),
- outer Adelaide region (Barossa, Kangaroo Island, Mt Lofty Ranges, and Fleurieu), and
- Kimberley region of WA.

It shows that improving access to local health and community care services potentially yields strong benefits, by enabling people to remain, be cared for, and work in their own community and by boosting local employment and economic activity.

“If services are withdrawn or reduced there would be significant job losses and decline of hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity across the communities not just in the sector, Greg Mundy said.

The report was undertaken for HESTA by consultancy firm CRA International, at the request of three of its members who are involved in the aged care sector as employers and employees (ACSA, Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union and the Health Services Union) .

ACSA believes that rural and remote Australia need alternative models of aged care delivery (such as the existing MultiPurpose Services (which were discussed at the workshop). Such services must be tailored to the specific needs of country people, including those from indigenous and culturally diverse backgrounds. Grants, research and evaluation must ensure that funding and quality care meet the individual circumstances of rural communities.

ACSA also called for a national aged care workforce strategy which emphasised recruitment and retention in rural and remote areas.

*For further comment contact Greg Mundy on 0416 203 065; for conference information and interviews contact Megan Stoyles on 0408 147 829. conference program www.agedcare.org.au.
For a copy of the report please visit www.hesta.com.au*

***ACSA represents over 1,200 church, charitable and community based organisations providing housing, supported accommodation and community care services to around half a million older Australians, people with a disability, and their carers.**