



Attention welfare, aged care, health rounds

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Case Management - Keeping care simple and making care happen.

An expansion of case management - the co-ordination of the care and services received by frail elderly people, those with a disability or with chronic health conditions - will be more cost effective and a more efficient use of scarce resources, such as public hospital and nursing home beds, by providing the care required in their own homes and community settings where appropriate. More importantly, it will save this vulnerable group of people the costly and confusing search for necessary care, thus allowing them to remain at home with the knowledge that they are receiving the appropriate support they require.

Aged and Community Services Australia (ACSA), representing church, charitable and community organizations, and the Case Management Society of Australia (CMSA) have called on the Commonwealth Government to recognize and support case management when it finalises the Government blueprint for community care reform, to be released later in 2006. Support for case management is required from State and local governments as well, as they are also involved in community care funding and services. **They will release a discussion paper at the CMSA National Conference in Melbourne on 16 February for public comment.**

The principle of case management is straightforward— providing a single point of contact for an individual, their family and carers and for all the services they may need - to match client needs with available resources in a creative and flexible way, making the best use of what is available.

“It sounds simple, but so many people don’t get the care they need because the Australian health system is complex and navigating the service system is challenging, and they don’t know where to go or who to go to, to find and use these services,” says Dr Deborah Roberts who represented CMSA on the working party which prepared the Discussion Paper *Case Management and Community Care*.

“ When these people don’t get help with finding the care they need, they often end up in a hospital bed longer than necessary, or are admitted to residential care, when with a little thought and help, the health and social services they need could be provided more cheaply, effectively and conveniently at home,” says Greg Mundy, CEO of ACSA.

Case management services can include assistance with and co-ordination of living and accommodation arrangements including: home cleaning services; meals; arrangement of alternative accommodation in the same or nearby region; living arrangements such as financial counseling and negotiations with utility providers; transport for medical appointments and social access; co-ordination of medical, pharmacy, and associated allied health services. While case management can be time intensive initially this reduces once the appropriate care plan is in place; clients are then reviewed and monitored regularly to ensure the care remains appropriate as their needs change. Most importantly, the goals developed in conjunction with the client, are focused on their individual need and the client has just one person to call for guidance.

Contacts and interviews: CMSA Dr Deborah Roberts: 0410 606 227; ACSA Greg Mundy: 0416 203 065. For interviews and pix with clients and case managers, contact Megan Stoyles 0408147829 for details. Discussion paper at www.cmsa.org.au and www.agedcare.org.au.