

# *The National Report*

**21 May 2010 – Issue 231**  
**Aged & Community Services Australia**



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## **Next National Report**

Due to the Community Care Conference from 2-4 June, the next National Report will be published the following week.

# Community Care Conference

## **Shrek and Princess Fiona Might Not Sit Next to You at Dinner But .....**

This year's Community Care Conference is being held on the Gold Coast – the home of Movie World, where there have been sightings of Shrek and Princess Fiona, among other members of Hollywood royalty.

Dinner at Movie World is included in this year's registration fee.

Aside from the fun with friends and colleagues, the conference is a professional development priority with a program of compelling speakers including General Peter Cosgrove AC MC. Join us from June 2 – 4 for Rethinking and Reshaping community care for the Next Generation ...and who knows, you might meet Shrek. His insights into caring for Scottish speaking ogres in their old age could be invaluable.

Go to <http://www.acqi.asn.au/acsa-2010> to register and view the full program

## **Register for the Health Super VIP Concierge Service.....**

Conference delegates are invited to make use of the Health Super VIP Concierge Service located adjacent to the Registration Desk.

This service will assist delegates with conference registration, restaurant recommendations / booking , items held for collection, mail, email, messages and courier services, airline bookings and confirmation, taxis, public transport and rental cars, tours and sightseeing, jogging/walking maps, dry cleaning plus much more.

To be entitled to this special offer, be one of the first 300 delegates to register via email to [vip@healthsuper.com.au](mailto:vip@healthsuper.com.au) by Monday 31 May. Note - All Health Super members are automatically entitled to this service but must still register via email.

Please include the following details in your e-mail: Name, Company/organisation, Contact number, and whether you are a Health Super member. Along with this offer you will also receive a gift from Health Super.

If you have any further questions in regards to this service please do not hesitate to contact Toola on 03 8613 9841 or email [tchatfield@healthsuper.com.au](mailto:tchatfield@healthsuper.com.au) .

## **Budget Question**

The Shadow Minister for Ageing, Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells has publicised an aged care budget funding change which had not been mentioned specifically in the mountain of official handouts.

The government plans to redirect funding of \$276.4 million over three years from high care residential aged care places to the state and territory governments to provide similar levels of care for Long Stay Older Places (LSOP) in public hospitals.

ACSA CEO, Greg Mundy, said while this is not a lot of money in the context of the \$10billion aged care program, ACSA will ask the government for more details.

## Cuts to Medicare Counselling Impact on Aged Care

The budget has cut Medicare payments for social workers and occupational therapists providing mental health services. This will mean that Grouplinks program, which has been supporting new residents and those with chronic diseases at a low care facility in Sydney's north since 2008 and which won a *Positive Living in Aged Care*) award, will have to end. There were plans to extend the program to other facilities.

The Grouplinks program supports residents who had, or were at risk of developing, depression and anxiety. It is based on a series of confidential group sessions aimed at assisting residents to adjust to major life changes.

The government says it redistributed mental health funding in the budget based on advice from the mental health sector. A statement from the Department of Health and Ageing said the government will provide care packages for up to 25,000 people diagnosed with severe mental illness.

"This is not a savings measure – in fact, the government will spend more overall on these programs," the statement said.

"This means that people who are diagnosed with a severe mental illness will receive more coordinated care through a team of health professionals – including social workers and occupational therapists – to comprehensively look after their ongoing care needs. This will deliver coordinated mental health care to those most in need in our community, rather than treatment on an ad-hoc basis."

## Opposition Promises Cuts in Health

Shadow Treasurer Joe Hockey has left the details on government programs the Opposition will cut if it comes to government, to Shadow Finance Minister Andrew Robb largely using family reminiscences and philosophical beliefs in his National Press Club Address on 19 May.

Cuts announced in the media before his speech included the \$467 million set aside for e-health in the current budget, and the \$325 million for the 23 new super clinics, and \$500,000 infrastructure grants to a 425 GPs to upgrade into super clinics, plus the scrapping of the \$43 billion broadband network which will impact on aged and community care information technology initiatives.

Greg Mundy commented that opposing investment in e-health and broadband was a false economy and a backward step. ACSA members particularly in rural areas are waiting for decent broadband services so that they can help clients avoid costly and risky trips to hospital.

## Nothing in Queensland HACC Announcement about Transfer of HACC to Commonwealth

The Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot, made a joint announcement with Queensland Disability Services Minister Annastacia Palaszczuk on 18 May about Home and Community Care (HACC) services in Queensland.

However Minister Elliot did not take the opportunity to promote or detail the transfer to the Commonwealth of these services which was agreed to at the Council of Australian Government (COAG) Meeting on 21 April (reported in National Report 229).

It does seem to have been a lost opportunity to provide further details of the momentous change and to sell its benefits.

The National Health and Hospitals Network Agreement says at Appendix 3: *...The implementation of the new arrangements for basic community care maintenance and support services will be carefully managed to ensure continuity of care for clients. The first phase of the implementation will include commitments from all governments to continue to deliver the current HACC Triennial Plans for each jurisdiction (end 30 June 2011). The Commonwealth will work with States to develop new funding arrangements to come into effect from 1 July 2011, with a smooth transfer to Commonwealth operational responsibility for HACC aged care services from 1 July 2012. The Commonwealth will fund service providers no earlier than 1 July 2012, and will not substantially alter service delivery mechanisms before 1 July 2015. "*

[http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2010-04-19/docs/NHHN\\_Agreement.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2010-04-19/docs/NHHN_Agreement.pdf)

## National Electronic Resident Agreement

The National Electronic Resident Agreement (NeRA) Software was implemented by ACSA and ACAA, in conjunction with Kennedy Strang Legal Group and e-Tools Software to be the standardised resident agreement generating solution for members nationally. Many members have been quick to adopt this new technology and are enjoying the many benefits of NeRA, including automatic online legal template updates. To ensure your resident agreements are always up-to-date and to simplify the process, please take the time to have a look at this revolutionary software solution by visiting the ACSA website.

<http://www.agedcare.org.au/PUBLICATIONS-&-RESOURCES/Resident%20Agreements.html>

## Australian Unity Wellbeing Survey

The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index measures the happiness and wellbeing of the Australian population. The latest results from the 21st survey conducted in May 2009 by Professor Bob Cummins from Deakin University, has been released.

The Personal Wellbeing Index measures people's satisfaction with their health, personal relationships, personal safety, standard of living, what they are achieving in life, community connection, future security and spirituality or religion.

Survey 21 revealed a significant increase in satisfaction with life in Australia to 85.3 on a 100 point scale - the highest level yet recorded in the Wellbeing Index's eight year history - and with the economic situation.

Australian Unity used the findings from its annual population-wide wellbeing survey to compare the perceived happiness of residents at its 16 villages with all survey participants aged 65 and over. It showed that retirement village residents have a greater sense of wellbeing (80.3) than older people living in the community (77.0), despite their satisfaction with health being significantly lower than the rest of the population.

Australian Unity is a member of Aged and Community Care Victoria, one of ACSA's six state associations.

<http://www.australianunitycorporate.com.au/community/auwi/Pages/default.aspx>

## Clearer Pension Rules for Household Solar Energy Panels

The Australian Government has taken steps to make feeding power into the grid simpler and fairer for pensioners and has clarified the way feed-in tariffs from household solar panels are assessed for the purposes of the pension income test.

Feed-in tariffs that are paid to pensioners as a credit on an electricity bill will not be assessed as income under the pension income test.

The use of credits to reduce the total of a pensioner's electricity bill is the way most state and territory feed-in tariff schemes work. Power sold back to the grid in return for cash, cheque or a direct deposit is counted as income for social security purposes.

This is consistent with the long standing pension rules where private income needs to be reported, whether income is derived from rent, superannuation or other sources.

Pensioners should contact Centrelink to discuss their particular circumstances.

## National Call for New Clinical Training Proposals

Proposals are being sought to drive a new wave of clinical training opportunities throughout Australia. Federal Government funding of \$139 million will be available to support clinical training studies for eligible health professions during the 2011 academic year.

Press advertisements have called for new proposals from universities, non-government health and aged care providers, as well as the providers of government funded health and aged care services.

The call for new proposals is led by Health Workforce Australia. Priority will be given to develop clinical training capacity in areas of existing professional, as well as geographic health workforce shortages, including for rural and remote settings, mental health, aged care and dental health.

Proposals should support the clinical training needs of the 24 different health professions agreed to by the Australian, state and territory Ministers, including such disciplines as Indigenous health, speech pathology, nursing, medical, midwifery, dentistry and allied oral health.

Information about the Clinical Training Funding Initiative at [www.hwa.gov.au](http://www.hwa.gov.au)

## Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability Care and Support

The Productivity Commission has released an Issues Paper to assist public discussions and submissions to the public inquiry into a long-term disability care and support scheme, which it is conducting.

It is examining a range of options for providing long-term care and support to people with disabilities, including consideration of the appropriateness of a no-fault social insurance approach to disability.

The inquiry will examine how a long-term disability care and support scheme could be designed, funded and implemented including its interaction with Australia's health, aged care, and income support systems.

Public hearings will be held between 7 June and 22 July, with initial submissions due at the end of June 2010.

The 2010-11 Budget included an additional investment of \$520,000 to support people with disability, their families and carers to participate in the Productivity Commission inquiry. The inquiry will report back to the Federal Government by July 2011.

The issues paper is available at: <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/disability-support/issues>

## Simple Way to Access Budget Information for Human Services Agency Customers

For the first time people who use Centrelink, Medicare Australia and the Child Support Agency will be able to visit the Human Services website [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au) or phone 13 24 68 to find out how the 2010-11 Budget will affect them.

It is also the first step towards providing people with information about the Human Services portfolio through a single point of access. The website will have a comprehensive overview of the Budget initiatives that affect Human Services agencies, with information arranged according to people's circumstances or topics such as families and seniors, along with a Frequently Asked Questions section.

People can subscribe to regular web feeds, known as RSS feeds, which will alert them when new information is added to the website as it becomes available in the coming weeks.

The Australian Government Human Services Budget Information phone line will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for callers to listen to recorded information about Budget measures that may affect them and their family. Callers will be asked to state what they are interested in hearing about, before being directed to relevant recorded messages with the information they require.

## Inquiry into Public Benefit Test for Charities and Religions

The Senate has announced an Economics Committee Inquiry into legislation on the need for charities and religious organisations to meet a Public Benefit Test before receiving tax exempt status.

The Inquiry results from a Private Senator's Bill which would require religious and charitable institutions to demonstrate public benefit through their aims and activities before being granted tax exempt status.

"This proposed amendment is no threat to charities or religions acting in the public good," Senator Nick Xenophon, who was instrumental in securing the inquiry, said. "It is simply designed to ensure that people who derive benefit from the Australian taxpayer actually provide benefit to the Australian people through good works."

A similar public benefit test has operated in the UK since 2006, and under the UK model, any identifiable benefit is balanced against any detriment or harm.

Senator Xenophon said that under the Bill a Public Benefit Test would include the following principles:

- There must be an identifiable benefit arising from an organisations aims and activities
- The benefit must be balanced against any detriment or harm; and,
- The benefit must be to the public or a significant section of the public and not merely to individuals with a material connection to the entity.

He said this approach is also supported by the finding of the Henry Review into taxation.

## Not for Profits Dealing with Significant Governance Challenges

Nearly eighty percent (80%) of Australian Not for Profit organisations rate the complexity of current financial reporting issues in the sector as moderate or extreme, according to a survey just released by governance experts Enterprise Care.

The survey of nearly 250 Not for Profit organisations found that they were struggling to cope with the burden of financial reporting, with many finding the systems currently in place were "ever-changing", "complex", "costly", "excessive", "unclear", "time consuming", "inconsistent" and "not fully developed".

Of major concern to many organisations was the increasing complexity and obligation for reporting to funding bodies, which in many cases differed to the requirements set out in Australian Accounting Standards.

Download a copy of the Report at:

[http://www.enterprisecare.com.au/upimages/Finance\\_and\\_Audit\\_Committee\\_Report.pdf](http://www.enterprisecare.com.au/upimages/Finance_and_Audit_Committee_Report.pdf)

## Andrew Podger Comments on “Deeply Disappointing” Health reforms

Important opportunities have been lost in the current plans for health reform, says Andrew Podger, National President of the Institute of Public Administration Australia and a former Health Department Secretary and Public Service Commissioner.

But he has some suggestions for how to make the best of a bad job. On aged care he wrote in on the Croakey blog on 17 May:

“The Commonwealth’s full responsibility for aged care needs to be exploited to develop a more coherent framework of community and residential care packages for people with different levels of care need. The successful ‘ageing in place’ approach could be made more cost-effective and responsive by relaxing some supply-side controls and increasing demand side controls (including the introduction of accommodation bonds for high-level residential care).

It will also be essential that both the Commonwealth and the States re-design their bureaucratic arrangements to clarify policy and administration responsibilities and avoid simply adding new overheads without rationalising existing structures.”

His full article is at <http://blogs.crikey.com.au/croakey/author/melissasweet/>

## Improving Patient Medication Safety

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) has, with the participation of 28 hospitals across Australia, launched a program to improve the safety of patients receiving medicines in hospitals, starting with patients aged 65 years and over who are admitted through the emergency ward to inpatient services.

Under the program, the participating hospitals will introduce standardised procedures to collect and check information about each patient’s medicines much more rigorously and accurately, starting from when the patient is first admitted to hospital and continuing through each stage of the patient’s hospital treatment when medicines may change.

The procedures are also designed to make sure that when the patient is finally discharged, they and their doctor will also get an accurate and comprehensive list of the medicines they may need to take once they are back in the community.

Further information at the Medication Safety Program page (under ‘Our Work’) at [www.safetyandquality.gov.au](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au)

## Coroner's Report on Aged Care Death

An AAP report on 14 May tells of an elderly Adelaide man who choked when his neck was trapped between his bed and a pole he used to help himself up, was the second person to die in such circumstances, a coroner says.

Reporting on the death of 87-year-old Arthur Sutton at an aged-care home in 2008, South Australian deputy coroner Anthony Schapel said another person had died in a similar manner, in Victoria in 2006.

He said the two deaths highlighted the risks associated with the bed poles that were widely used in nursing homes.

Mr Schapel said the poles shouldn't be used where there was a gap between the bed and the pole or where the user had a history of falls or if their faculties were impaired.

The coroner recommended manufacturers of the pole provide written instructions on their proper installation and for any person or organisation using one to conduct a risk assessment. He called for the federal government to inform all aged-care providers of his recommendations.

## Reverse Mortgages and Older People: Growth Factors and Implications for Retirement Decisions

The Australasian Housing & Urban Research Institute (AHURI) released this Report, on 10 May.

It finds that if reverse mortgage products are to be accessed to enable ageing in place by supplementing the housing and care support needs of older homeowners, greater guidance and support is required for the most frail and vulnerable.

There is a need for increased regulation, better advice to consumers, reduction in break fees and continued monitoring of the situation of reverse mortgage holders given the nature of the product and of the client group.

Download report at [http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/download/70512\\_fr](http://www.ahuri.edu.au/publications/download/70512_fr)  
For further information email [homelessness.research@fahcsia.gov.au](mailto:homelessness.research@fahcsia.gov.au).

## National Homelessness Research Projects

On 18 May Minister for Housing, Tanya Plibersek announced the successful applicants for the National Homelessness Research Projects. Funding has been offered to 16 research projects for a total of \$1.5 million

The research projects are an important bottom-up approach to give the capacity to respond to emerging priorities, encourage innovation and leverage external funding. For further information email [homelessness.research@fahcsia.gov.au](mailto:homelessness.research@fahcsia.gov.au).

## More Digital Services for Rural, Regional and Remote Australia

The Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy, has announced a second round of proposals to deliver innovative digital services for communities in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia.

Senator Conroy has released the guidelines for round two funding under the Government's Digital Regions Initiative which calls for full applications by 14 July 2010.

The \$60 million Digital Regions Initiative will fund projects that deliver vital high quality digital applications for education, health and emergency services," Senator Conroy said. Eleven projects totalling \$32.9 million were offered funding under round one of the Initiative, including a chronic disease management systems in the Hunter New England region of NSW.

While the National Broadband Network rollout is underway, this funding allows regional, rural and remote communities to benefit from innovative digital applications in the short term.

For more information to apply for funding under the Digital Regions Initiative visit:

[www.dbcde.gov.au/digitalregions](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/digitalregions)

## Paul Newman's Legacy Available for Australian Charities.

Paul Newman is once again looking for Australian charities who need up to \$A75,000 to fund a specific project. The total pool is \$A1 million.

2010 grants will see an elevated level of support, but not be restricted to, the provision of vehicles. Paul Newman was a well known car buff, so this campaign is a fitting tribute to his memory.

Charities with ATO DGR (Deductible Gift Recipient) status providing a rebate for the donor for income tax purposes, & ITEC (Income Tax Exempt Charity) are invited to submit an Expression of Interest.

No Expression of Interest should be submitted without these ATO documents. Expressions of Interest close 28 May 2010.

[http://www.paulnewmansown.com.au/pdfs/charity/10/AU/expression\\_interest\\_au.pdf](http://www.paulnewmansown.com.au/pdfs/charity/10/AU/expression_interest_au.pdf)

## The All Groups Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI)

The PBLCI rose 1.2% for the March quarter 2010, compared with a rise of 0.6% in the December quarter 2009. It showed a larger increase for the March quarter 2010 (+1.2%) than the CPI (+0.9%).

The PBLCI rose 2.9% through the year to March quarter 2010, compared to a through the year rise of 2.7% to December quarter 2009. It showed the same increase through the year to March quarter 2010 as the CPI (+2.9%).

## Aged Carers Offered Cut Rate Mobile e-health

Silver Chain will offer its enterprise in-house built e-health smartphone application at cost-price to hundreds of aged care facilities.

The platform means nurses can build detailed patient records on medical treatments, symptoms, and pain, fatigue and nausea levels. Aged care providers can use the application for reporting and finance services.

The system, dubbed ComCare, is used by more than 1000 Silver Chain mobile nurses using Ericsson smartphones. The WA health care provider has up to 700 nurses using the system at any given time who service more than 40,000 patients a year.

Chief information officer Allan Turner said he is in talks with cloud hosting providers to make the system available to small aged care facilities “as cheaply as possible”. “We want to structure it where all smaller organisations that don’t have enterprise capability can access it cheaply,” Turner said.

He said the system could eventually accept electronic data from pharmacies, general practitioners, or hospitals, and provide the industry with updated benchmarks on clinical treatments. [www.silverchain.org.au](http://www.silverchain.org.au)

## Health System Expenditure on Disease and Injury in Australia, 2004-05

This internet only report provides a systematic analysis of health system expenditures associated with specific disease and injury groups in Australia in 2004-05.

Expenditure on cardiovascular disease is compared with expenditure on cancer, injuries, nervous system disorders and other diseases. Health expenditure for each age group ranges from \$2,223 per year for girls/boys aged 5 to 14 years to \$8,030 per year for women/men aged 75 to 84 years. This report also discusses the changes in expenditure by disease between 2000-01 and 2004-05. AIHW catalogue number (HSE 87) [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au) Social Enterprise Financial Sustainability

## Financing Social Enterprise: Understanding Needs and Realities

On 22 April, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector, Senator Ursula Stephens, launched *Financing Social Enterprise: Understanding Needs and Realities* report, which has been produced by Foresters Community Finance.

The research highlights the need for social enterprises to understand and adopt sustainable business operations, including moving the focus away from reliance on grant funding. The report is available at: [www.foresters.org.au](http://www.foresters.org.au)

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