

# *The National Report*

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**Aged & Community Services Australia**



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## ACSA Looking to the Future - A Stronger Voice for Aged Care Providers

ACSA has started a process of examining the way it is structured and organised with a view to developing organisational arrangements for the twenty-first century, in place of our current model which dates from 1974.

The ACSA Board and the National and State Association CEOs have had a series of workshops to discuss this and a consultant is to be engaged shortly to develop and assess specific options by mid 2010. Discussion of the consultants report throughout the ACSA Federation will take place over the second half of this year and into 2011.

Building a stronger voice for aged care providers is the objective but there is no pre-determined model in mind. Rather we are seeking to carefully evaluate the alternatives so that we can make informed decisions on our future.

### ACSA Panels on Health Reform

ACSA has convened five expert panels to assist the government's hospitals and health reform process.

The panels will focus on the key areas of consumer choice, the interface between aged care and the broader health system, access and assessment, workforce issues and managing the reform process.

They will draw on the sector's experience and consult with external stakeholders, such as specialists and geriatricians, to make recommendations to the government.

ACSA CEO Greg Mundy said the association supported the government's principles for reform but some of the ideas need further development.

"It's about working out what this might mean in practice," he said. "The report has given us the parameters, some options and even some potential trip points but we need to put a bit more flesh on the bones.

"For example, a lot of people say aged care can help with the discharge of older people from hospitals and add to the efficiency of the health system. That's true but we are looking at how that can be done because there are some important details that need to be worked through." The five panels will issue reports by the middle of the year and ACSA will share the findings with the federal government and the Productivity Commission.

### Worm Gives it to Prime Minister

The ACSA office tuned in on the radio and checked online for the first of the 'Great Debates' on health - between the Prime Minister and Opposition Leader on 23 March.

The worm went up when the Prime Minister mentioned aged care, indicating that the worm's audience was concerned at the issue. The PM linked ageing to the overall question of health funding and delivery, and promised a 100% takeover of the sector by the Commonwealth. He also said local hospital network boards would work closely with local aged and primary services.

Opposition Leader Abbott didn't mention ageing at all, and when he mentioned schools and insulation, the worm dipped.

Neither leader outlined concrete plans for aged care. Greg Mundy said "We need to get on with equipping our sector to support our ageing population. Debates are good but we need to start on the action to achieve choice and access for older people to a sustainable service system."

## Minister Elliot Claims Older Australians Will Benefit From Hospital Changes

Older Australians will be among the biggest beneficiaries of the Government's health care reforms – particularly through the creation of Local Hospital Networks, according to Minister Elliot on an ALP Blog.

She said, "Care will extend beyond the hospital doors. The Networks will work with local primary health and aged care providers, to ensure that locally responsive and tailored care is delivered so that older people receive the care they need when they need it."

## National Carer Recognition Bill

The National Carer Recognition Bill 2010 was tabled in Parliament on Wednesday 17 March by Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The legislation was first announced at the launch of Carers Week 2009 in October last year and is part of a broader Carer Recognition Framework committed to by the government.

The Bill establishes a definition of *carer* and sets down ten principles, including the fundamental principle that all carers should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians.

The Bill also means that all public service agencies will need to make sure their staff have an awareness and understanding of the principles. Any public service agencies with responsibility for policies, programs and services that affect carers and the people they care for will need to ensure their staff take actions to reflect the principles, report on how they meet the principles, and consult with carers and representative bodies on issues.

## Bentley's National Aged Care Financial Survey

National accounting association Bentley's' 2009 National *Aged Care Financial Survey* reports that more than 40 per cent of providers are currently operating at a loss, with average profits halved in the past three years to less than 5 per cent.

The 2008/2009 financial year performance data surveyed 350 service providers, or approximately 12 per cent of all aged care providers. It indicated costs are increasing at a higher rate than revenue streams such as subsidies, resident fees and interest on accommodation bonds.

"With fundamental health reform on the agenda, aged care costs are in the spotlight again," said Bentley's' director Heath Shonhan.

“Bentleys’ latest survey found that expenses like care and nursing, wages on-costs, administration, catering, property, cleaning and laundry costs are absorbing 93 per cent of income, with finance and depreciation costs using up what’s left.

The survey indicated that non-metropolitan providers are facing particularly challenging times, with more than half of them operating at a loss, compared with 37 per cent of metropolitan providers.

Providers outside of major cities also earned on average 36 per cent less than those in metropolitan areas in the last financial year.” Survey details available at: [www.bentleysbenchmarking.com.au/2009-survey-findings-webinars.aspx](http://www.bentleysbenchmarking.com.au/2009-survey-findings-webinars.aspx)

## Stewart Brown Business Solutions Aged Care Financial Performance Survey

The steep increase in the utilities costs of aged care facilities seen at the beginning of the financial year continued throughout the rest of 2009, according to the latest *Aged Care Financial Performance Survey* from Stewart Brown Business Solutions.

Drawing on data from 380 facilities across Australia, it found the average utilities cost was 20 per cent higher in December 2009 than six months earlier.

According to the report, this signals the need for a fundamental shift in residential aged care management, which now need to start managing these costs as well as those that have traditionally been within their purview.

Another trend from the September quarter which continued throughout the rest of 2009 was a slight reduction in care costs for high care services. The proportion of operating income devoted to staff wages fell from 73.43 per cent in June to 70.17 per cent in December. In the latest survey, the ratio of registered nurses to other nursing staff was 5:1, down from 4:1 in June 2007.

General financial results were also up on the June figures, particularly in high care where the benefits from the increase in maximum subsidy rates in July were still being felt. Only thirty-nine per cent of high facilities and 48 per cent of low care facilities managed to achieve an operating profit. Details about the survey at:

[http://www.sbbsolutions.com.au/html/s02\\_article/article\\_view.asp?id=101&nav\\_cat\\_id=127&nav\\_top\\_id=57](http://www.sbbsolutions.com.au/html/s02_article/article_view.asp?id=101&nav_cat_id=127&nav_top_id=57)

## Aged Care Workforce Records Fastest and Largest Growth

The latest *ABS Quarterly: Labour Force Report* shows that the ‘health and social assistance’ sector now provides jobs to 1.2 million Australians, compared to retail's 1.18 million. It now employs 1 in every 9 Australians, and within the sector the fastest-growing type of work is aged care, now employing a record 205,000 Australians, up from 163,000 just a year before.

Writing and blogging on the statistics on 19 March, Fairfax economics correspondent Peter Martin quoted labour market specialist Mark Wooden of the Melbourne Institute. "It will keep getting bigger. The entire sector will one day account for 1 in every 2 workers."

"Go back a century and only 1 in 35 Australians worked in health and aged care. But whereas we have been able to automate other industries, it's hard to automate this one," Wooden said.

Retail employment has grown roughly in line with population, but health and aged care employment has grown far faster, doubling in a little over 20 years.

Comparing the sector's growth to manufacturing which used to employ 1 in 4 Australians - Wooden said "we have found ways to make things using fewer people. To some extent we will be able to use expensive technologies to do that in health, but in the rest of the caring sector about the only way to provide more is to employ more people."

The growth "is driven by demographics, no doubt about that," said Professor Wooden. "But it is also driven by increasing wealth. The richer we get the more we are prepared to spend buying good health and aged care. We are prepared to do it both through the welfare state, by paying more tax, and also privately by buying better services. Many people think that it is only poor societies that spend big on welfare, it is actually the other way around".

## **National Compact between Australian Government and Not-For-Profit Sector**

The 18 March launch of the National Compact with the third sector will continue to rebuild the relationship between Government and the not-for-profit sector that suffered under the previous Government, according to Prime Minister Rudd.

He and several Ministers signed the compact on behalf of the Australian Government, along with 23 foundation signatories from the NFP sector. The National Compact: working together includes eight priorities for action:

- Document and promote the value and contribution of the sector;
- Protect the sector's right to advocacy irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist;
- Recognise sector diversity in consultation processes and sector development initiatives;
- Improve information sharing including greater access to publicly funded research and data;
- Reduce red tape and streamline reporting;
- Simplify and improve consistency of financial arrangements including across state and federal jurisdictions;
- Act to improve paid and unpaid workforce issues; and
- Improve funding and procurement processes.

All not-for-profit organisations are invited to sign up to the compact. Interested organisations should visit [www.nationalcompact.gov.au](http://www.nationalcompact.gov.au).

## **Nurse Practitioner Legislation**

On 17 March the Senate passed legislation giving nurse practitioners and midwives access to the Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS) and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for the first time from 1 November 2010.

Nurse practitioners will be able to provide care in the most appropriate settings, such as aged care facilities, primary care settings or people's homes.

Nurse practitioners and midwives wishing to provide treatment under Medicare and prescribe medicines under the PBS will need to demonstrate that they meet certain professional eligibility requirements and that they have appropriate collaborative arrangements in place. Minister Roxon said the legislation was a key part of the Government's workforce strategy:

## **Fees, Charges and Pension Rates**

A slew of Regulations and Determinations have been made to enable changes to resident fees and charges, and interest rates, including deeming amounts, following the latest CPI increases. On 19 March Minister Elliot has signed determinations covering residential care subsidies, concessional, resident, respite, and transitional accommodation supplements. User Rights Amendment Principles have also been handed down.

The maximum permissible interest rate for accommodation bond agreements is 8.16% for all new residents from 1st April 2010. For residents entering a facility from 20 March 2010 to 31 March 2010, the previous rate of 7.95% applies.

The quarterly review of income tested fees will be conducted on 27 March 2010, with an effective date of 20 March 2010. Letters will be issued following the review only if the income tested fees for the new quarter are different to the last quarter, or if a refund is due.

The Department(DoHA) has emailed the changes to all facilities and advised that any queries about the Schedule of Fees and Charges or other content of the email, should be made to the Aged Care Information Line on 1880 500 853.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6291.0.55.003?OpenDocument>

## **Pensions Increase**

From 20 March pension payments, including Veterans' pensions will increase by \$29.20 a fortnight for singles on the maximum rate, and \$44.00 a fortnight for couples combined on the maximum rate.

Following these increases, total pension payments for those on the maximum rate, including the base rate and pension supplement, will be \$701.10 a fortnight for singles, and \$1,057.00 a fortnight for couples combined

## **Weekly Payments for Vulnerable Australians**

Vulnerable Australians will now have the option of receiving their regular income support payments weekly, instead of fortnightly, to help them better manage their budgets.

Under the Social Security and Family Legislation Amendment (Weekly Payments) Bill 2010 - passed on 18 March - Centrelink staff will be able to offer the weekly payment option to customers identified as having difficulties budgeting their payments across the fortnight.

The changes will help people, particularly the homeless and those at risk of homelessness, who find it difficult to budget and often end the fortnight with no money left to pay the bills. The introduction of weekly payments was a specific commitment in the Government's White Paper on Homelessness, The Road Home.

## Aged Care Administrator and Adviser Panels

DoHA is seeking nominations to the Aged Care Administrator and Adviser Panels, which are established under the Aged Care Act 1997 to provide expertise on a consultancy basis on compliance issues. Applications close on 5 April. Details and an application pack are available at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-rescare-sanctions-advadm.htm>.

## Volunteer Grants 2010

On 11 March it was announced that \$21 million of one-off grants are now available to volunteer organisations under the Volunteer Grants 2010 initiative.

Grants between \$1,000 and \$5,000 are available to help eligible non-profit organisations purchase equipment, cover fuel costs, and for the first time, provide training courses and background checks.

Applications close at 2pm on Friday 16 April 2010. To apply, or for more information, call 1800 183 374 or visit <http://www.fahcsia.gov.au>

## Court Decision Upholds Rights of People with Guide Dogs to Catch Taxis

A decision by a NSW Court to fine a taxi driver for refusing to carry a guide dog is a win for the rights of people with disabilities, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities Bill Shorten said on 17 March.

The case was brought by Disability and Race Discrimination Commissioner Graeme Innes, who was refused service in April last year by a Sydney taxi which refused to allow his guide dog into the vehicle.

Mr Innes made a complaint to the NSW Department of Transport about the incident and the department launched a prosecution under the NSW Transport Act. The driver was today fined \$750 and ordered to pay \$2500 in costs.

Mr Shorten said that treatment Mr Innes had experienced was still too common. "In January this year Guide Dogs NSW/ACT commissioned an independent survey of people who use guide dogs," Mr Shorten said. "The survey found that one in three people who use a guide dog had been refused entry by a taxi driver in the last 12 months. "This is not an acceptable situation and it is one that deters some people with assistance animals from catching taxis."

## Recognising, Preventing and Responding to Abuse of Older People Living in the Community: A Resource for Community Care Workers

There is a growing recognition of the incidence of abuse of older people by people in a relationship of trust with them such as family, friends or others on whom they depend.

Community care workers are in a unique position to support older people who are vulnerable to abuse, and to assist them if abuse occurs.

This briefing has been prepared by the Department of Social Work at The University of Melbourne in partnership with The Benevolent Society.

Click on the link below to see the full paper.

<http://www.bensoc.org.au/uploads/documents/research-to-practice-briefing3-abuse-of-older-people-mar2010.pdf>

## National Clinical Practice Guidelines Portal

A new national Clinical Practice Guidelines Portal was launched on 26 February that will provide links to current Australian guidelines developed by governments, professional colleges, specialty societies and nongovernment agencies.

Clinical practice guidelines are critical tools used by health professionals and researchers to improve the health of Australians, yet in the past have often been hard to locate, difficult to access and sometimes out of date.

Developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council's National Institute of Clinical Studies, the new national portal is a 'one stop shop' for clinicians, researchers, policy makers and consumers to access guidelines developed during the preceding five years for use in the Australian health care system.

In addition to the Portal, the NHMRC has developed a national clinical practice Guidelines in Development Register. This Register contains information about clinical practice guidelines that are planned or currently being developed in Australia. The Portal and Register can be accessed at [www.clinicalguidelines.gov.au](http://www.clinicalguidelines.gov.au) Further information is available at: [www.nhmrc.gov.au](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au)

## Disability Candidate Elected to the South Australian Legislative Council

The late disability advocate Paul Collier has been elected to the Upper House in the South Australian Parliament. He suffered a brain haemorrhage and died on 9 March, but his name remained on the ballot paper after his death.

Paul's place in the Legislative Council will be taken by the No.2 candidate on the *Dignity4Disability* group ticket, Kelly Vincent. Kelly will hold the position for the next 8 years, two terms of 4 years.

## Better Oral Health in Residential Care Training

*National Report No. 222* (26 February ) outlined details of the *Better Oral Health in Residential Care Training* , which has now commenced and is coming soon to a region near you.

A number of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) nationally have been selected to undertake the training. They are currently contacting homes to let them know of the training schedule. For further information about training in your area, please contact the relevant RTO, as per the following:

Region	RTO	Website	Phone
ACT	Health Skills Australia	<a href="http://www.healthskills.com.au">www.healthskills.com.au</a>	1300 306 886
NSW - major cities & inner & outer Regional NSW	Health Skills Australia	<a href="http://www.healthskills.com.au">www.healthskills.com.au</a>	1300 306 886
NSW - Remote	TAFE NSW-New England	<a href="http://www.newengland.tafensw.edu.au">www.newengland.tafensw.edu.au</a>	02 6768 2061
Queensland	Southern Queensland Institute of Technology	<a href="http://www.sqit.tafe.qld.gov.au/courses/course_areas/aged_care_oral_health_training.html">http://www.sqit.tafe.qld.gov.au/courses/course_areas/aged_care_oral_health_training.html</a>	07 4694 1903
Northern Territory	Health Skills Australia	<a href="http://www.healthskills.com.au">www.healthskills.com.au</a>	1300 306 886
South Australia - major cities & inner & outer Regional SA	Royal District Nursing Service (RDNS)	<a href="http://www.rdns.org.au/education/index.php">www.rdns.org.au/education/index.php</a>	1300 364 264
South Australia - remote and very remote	Health Skills Australia	<a href="http://www.healthskills.com.au">www.healthskills.com.au</a>	1300 306 886
Tasmania	Tasmanian Skills Institute	<a href="http://www.skillsinstitute.com.au">www.skillsinstitute.com.au</a>	03 6336 2764
Victoria	Health Skills Australia	<a href="http://www.healthskills.com.au">www.healthskills.com.au</a>	1300 306 886
Western Australia	Central Institute of Technology (formerly Central TAFE)	<a href="http://www.central.wa.edu.au">www.central.wa.edu.au</a>	08 9427 3725

Further information about the training is available from:  
<http://www.health.gov.au/betteroralhealthtraining>

## GST Changes

The Senate on 11 March passed two important Bills relating to the goods and services tax (GST) that make it easier and more certain for taxpayers to comply with the law and for the Tax Office to administer the GST.

They reduce GST administration costs, streamline the law and remove several anomalies. *Tax Laws Amendment (2009 GST Administration Measures) Bill 2009* together with *Tax Laws Amendment (2010 GST Administration Measures No. 1) Bill 2010* make a number of changes to the law to improve clarity.

These include changes to the four-year period of review, the treatment of overpaid refunds, the rules for attributing input tax credits to tax periods and how the GST law applies to gambling operators making GST-free supplies.

The amendments will also address a long-standing irritant for taxpayers in relation to the appropriate treatment of payments between parties in a supply chain. The amendments ensure that manufacturers' rebates, which in effect change the price of a transaction, result in adjustments for the payer and the third party, reflecting the economic outcome of the transaction. The amendment will apply to third party payments made on or after 1 July 2010.

## **ACSA 2010 Aged Care Excellence Awards**

Celebrate – Share – Recognise  
Innovation – Excellence - Dedication

**Queensland Award Winners** were announced last week at the ACQ State Conference Dinner held at Conrad Jupiters on the Gold Coast.

Our congratulations to:

Organisation Award: D & G Community Services, Cairns

Employee Award: Alice Satherwaite, Churches of Christ Care, Kenmore

Industry Supporter: SSS Australia, healthcare supplies

Here is your chance to celebrate the outstanding contribution by those in aged care in your State – whether you nominate an employee, a volunteer or your organisation as a whole, there is an Award category to suit.

Click on the relevant State link below for further information and nomination forms. All State winners progress to the National Awards.

### **NSW and ACT**

Nominations close Thursday 1 April 2010 [www.agedservices.asn.au](http://www.agedservices.asn.au)

### **SA and NT**

Nominations close Friday 16 April 2010 [www.agedcommunity.asn.au](http://www.agedcommunity.asn.au)

### **Western Australia**

Nominations close Wednesday 21 April 2010 [www.acswa.org.au](http://www.acswa.org.au)

### **Victoria**

Nominations close Friday 23 April 2010 [www.accv.com.au](http://www.accv.com.au)

### **Tasmania**

Award winners announced in October 2009 will go forward to this years National Awards. Nominations for 2010 State Awards will be called later in the year.

## **Aged Care Software Initiative Wins National Broadband Award**

A ground-breaking project which helps people in aged care facilities stay connected to their families and communities has won recognition at a national telecommunications industry awards event. The ConnectCare project, led by [Church Resources](#), won the award in the Health category for introducing 'software as a service' technology into the not-for-profit, aged care sector, at the fourth annual National Awards for the Effective Use of Broadband.

## Community Aged Care Nursing Scholarships

Nurses in the community aged care sector are being encouraged to take advantage of an Australian Government scholarship scheme to enhance their professional skills.

Royal College of Nursing Australia's (RCNA) Acting Chief Executive Officer, Kathleen McLaughlin, says the Postgraduate Community Aged Care Nursing Scholarship Scheme, which is administered by RCNA, is now seeking applications from community aged care nurses who are keen to keep up with the latest technologies, practices and innovations in health care. Last year over 130 nurses benefited from these scholarships and the RCNA is hoping to offer more in 2010. Nurses can utilise these postgraduate scholarships to fund a variety of activities including:

- up to \$10,000 for tertiary studies
- up to \$5,000 for short courses/workshops
- up to \$3,000 for conference attendance.

Registered (Division1) nurses working in community aged care who have undertaken professional development activities in 2009 and/or those who are planning to undertake activities to further their career in 2010 are encouraged to apply. For further information contact RCNA: [www.rcna.org.au](http://www.rcna.org.au); p 1800 551 201, or [Email: scholarships@rcna.org.au](mailto:scholarships@rcna.org.au)

## Aged Care Radio Via TV

Aged care residents across the country will now be able to tune into a dedicated radio station through their television sets. The Aged Care Radio station broadcasts news and a wide range of music, including blues, jazz, country and music from the '60s.

The new Web2TV service from Aged Care Radio uses the internet to transmit radio programs into a facility's TV network. All that is needed to pick up the signal is an internet connection and a special set-top box.

The Web2TV service also allows facilities to display news, updates and games on residents' television screens. It uses a separate ADSL connection to ensure that it doesn't interfere with existing IT infrastructure.

The system costs \$9,000 to install and users then pay a \$4,000 annual subscription and maintenance fee. [www.agedcareradio.com.au](http://www.agedcareradio.com.au)

## The Facts on Swine Flu - and on 2010 Seasonal Flu Vaccine

Health Minister Roxon has warned that Australians must be prepared for possible outbreaks of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza – or swine flu – moving into the Southern Hemisphere flu season. She has pointed out that unlike other forms of influenza, swine flu has had a lesser impact on older Australians.

In 2010 there have been almost 50 confirmed cases of swine flu in Australia. Protection against swine flu is included in the 2010 seasonal flu vaccine but supplies are primarily targeted at risk groups, including people with chronic medical conditions such as cardiac disease and respiratory conditions and people aged 65 years and over.

## Bad News on Falls in Residential Aged Care

A cluster randomised controlled trial to prevent injury due to falls in a residential aged care population has been reported in the MJA 2010; 192 (6): 319-322.

It aimed to test the effectiveness of using a full-time project nurse to assist residential aged care facilities in using evidence-based approaches to falls injury prevention.

The report said that despite significant increases in the provision of hip protectors and use of vitamin D supplementation in both intervention and control facilities, there was no difference in the number of falls or falls injuries between the intervention and control groups, nor a reduction in falls overall.

It concluded that 'it is difficult to change falls risk among high-risk populations, including people with dementia. The use of important strategies such as hip protectors and vitamin D and calcium supplementation increased during the study, probably with contamination of control facilities. Longer follow-up may be required to measure the impact on falls outcomes of the strategy of using a facilitating nurse.

## UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons

A UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons is necessary to ensure that older women and men can realize their rights. Establishing a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons is the central recommendation contained in a new resource developed for 'conversations and advocacy efforts toward instruments to protect the rights of older people.' This document is the result of a collaborative project between the international ageing and seniors' associations IAHSa (to which ACSA is affiliated), IFA, INPEA, ILC-US, IAGG, GAA, AGE UK, and AARP. It can be accessed at:

[www.ifa-fiv.org/attachments/057\\_Feb2010%20-%20Strengthening%20Rights%20Resource.pdf](http://www.ifa-fiv.org/attachments/057_Feb2010%20-%20Strengthening%20Rights%20Resource.pdf)

## Age Friendly Environments - A Post - International Federation of Ageing Conference Workshop: Melbourne, Australia - May 7, 2010

The IFA will co-facilitate an "Age Friendly" workshop with the WHO in association with the IFA's *10th Global Conference on Ageing* in Melbourne in May. This event will take place immediately following the conclusion of the Conference. Dr John Beard (Department of Ageing and Life Course, WHO) and the IFA's Secretary General Dr Jane Barratt, (International Federation on Ageing) will serve as co-hosts. This event builds on the Age Friendly Cities pre-conference workshop held in September 2008 in Montreal, in association with IFA's 9th Global Conference on Ageing.

The main goals of this event are to provide a forum for cities involved in or interested in the WHO's global Age Friendly movement to learn best practices, hear about recent developments and explore ways to strengthen a network of international collaboration.

Registration will be open shortly and there is limited space available for this event. However, if you would like to participate, we recommend that you register your interest early on the Conference website: <http://www.ifa2010.org/program-workshops.asp>

## ACSA Community Care Conference - Online Registration Available Soon

Don't break down the doors - check online for ACSA Community Care Conference *Next Generation*, from 2-4 June 2010, at the Gold Coast Registration details are expected to be online by the end of the week, so check at: <http://www.acqi.asn.au/acsa2010/index.html>

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