

The National Report

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Aged & Community Services Australia



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ACSA Agendas Issue 53 Autumn 2010 Out Now

The latest edition of *Agendas*, published by ACSA, should now be in hands - or letterboxes - of all members and subscribers.

It features analyses of the national health and hospital reforms by academic, provider, consumer and other experts, ideas and action on housing and older Australians, and many other stimulating and topical articles.

ACSA Calls for End to Aged Care Blame

ACSA CEO Greg Mundy on 21 February called for an end to the naming, blaming and shaming of aged care facilities by the media, saying that they... “serve only to fuel anxiety and generate headlines.”

No elderly person in a nursing home, or anywhere else, should suffer any form of neglect and any instances of improper care or treatment should be immediately brought to the attention of nursing home operators by family, friends or staff. Serious issues can also be reported to the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA), he said.

However far too often the media is the first recourse for those concerned about conditions in nursing homes. The media is right to be concerned but they fail in their responsibility to present the complete story.

If the media, and the public, are seriously interested in aged care, where are the follow up reports to the alleged instances of poor care? Where are the stories on how the Government intends to address the serious and complex issues facing service delivery as the percentage of older Australians escalates? Where is the outrage about the lack of planning for the future?

ACSA and other aged care organisations, including consumer groups, have long been advocating for aged care issues to be taken seriously by the government, the public and the media. The Government has taken significant steps to redress these issues through the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and a planned Productivity Commission inquiry into aged care among other initiatives.

However, the public and media focus continues to centre on peripheral issues including the plight of ageing Baby Boomers, shocking stories on isolated incidents in nursing homes, and why it's wrong to sell the family home to pay for aged care accommodation.

Getting old is a fact of life. Serious health issues for frail elderly people are a fact of life. Poor treatment of elderly Australians should never be a fact of life, nor should the lack of facilities and services for older people.

The Prime Minister has said repeatedly the “blame game” serves no purpose. Let's end the blame game in aged care. We owe it to older Australians and future generations of older people to do the right thing and make aged care work.

Pay Cuts for Aged Care Nurses Not On

The \$300 pay cuts for Queensland and NSW aged care nurses are not going to happen, ACSA's Greg Mundy has stated.

He said urgent reforms needed to cater for Australia's ageing population were being overshadowed by a campaign of misinformation on pay rates.

It is true that minimum pay rates for aged care nurses have changed under the Government's modern awards, however, the nature of the modern awards means the impact will be different in each state and different for each industry.

In Queensland and NSW, the new minimum rates for aged care nurses are lower than those previously paid under state awards. For other states, the minimum rate is higher than rates in place before January 1. For Queensland and NSW aged care providers, that means they are entitled to make incremental reductions over the transition period until they reach the minimum rate – which would allegedly equate to a \$300 a week pay cut in five years time.

In that time national wage case adjustments to minimum pay rates will erode that figure to a greater or lesser degree, depending on a range of economic factors. The \$300 "loss" only works if applied to the current minimum rate. Most nurses in these states are employed under enterprise agreements which preserve their pay and conditions – meaning they would not suffer a \$300 a week pay cut, now or in five years.

Analysis of Financial Impact of Award Modernisation in Aged Care

It was revealed at Senate Estimates on 10 February that Minister Elliot has commissioned Access Economics to do an analysis and modelling of the financial impact of award modernisation on the aged care sector, with \$144,320 spent on work from 3 August to 31 December. DoHA is considering the draft report before it is finalized and given to Minister Elliot.

DCM Insulation

ACSA contacted DCM Insulations, with whom it has an agreement to install insulation in members' retirement villages, to ensure that the insulation they use was not the metal type blamed for accidents and deaths. DCM has confirmed that they only use Boral batts which are similar to pink batts and not involved in any fatality.

Prime Minister, Ministerial Responsibility and Aged Care

The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, at a press conference on 23 February, used aged care to illustrate his view of ministerial responsibility.

“I think the proper definition of ministerial responsibility is as follows: one, that a minister, when charged by Cabinet with the implementation of a program has commissioned, through his department, appropriate risk assessment as to what measures should be put in place for the proper implementation of the program; secondly, that the minister then acts appropriately in response to the departmental advice that the minister receives in the implementation of that program,” he said.

“In the broader debate of ministerial responsibility, let us look at the daily responsibilities of those who have been minister for ageing in the past and at present. The Australian Government funds, primarily, almost exclusively, the aged care system of Australia. On a day-to-day basis, what happens in an aged care institution in terms of the operation of it can produce some awful results, which we've seen over time.”

“Is the Minister directly responsible for each and every one of those events? Well, it goes back to the more fundamental systemic questions of what risk assessment was undertaken in the design of a policy, and has the minister in question acted responsibly in terms of the departmental advice that was put to him or her in laying out a program? Whether it's the aged care system, whether it's the transport system, whether it's the road system, whether it's the safety and security of our Defence forces at a particular time as well, let's put some context into this debate about what constitutes ministerial responsibility.”

Leader of Opposition on Health and Hospital Budgets

“The best change that could be made for public hospitals is giving the doctors and nurses who work in them as well as the community that's served by them more say over how they are run.”

“After all, the fundamental job of a public hospital is to serve patients. Meeting budget is important but if that seriously compromises services to patients, the budget must be changed.”

Extract of Tony Abbott's plan for returning responsibility for running hospitals to local communities rather than state or federal governments.

Let's hope he extends this largess to aged care too!

ACSA 2010 Aged Care Excellence Awards

State Associations are currently calling for nominations for these Awards.

There are six Award Categories - Employee, Volunteer, Trainee, Organisation, Media, Industry Supporter – so don't just stop at one nomination!

Click on the relevant State link below and take a look at what is involved in nominating for an Award. Remember - all State winners progress to the National Awards.

NSW and ACT

Calling for nominations, visit www.agedservices.asn.au

Nominations close Thursday 1 April 2010.

SA and NT

Calling for nominations, visit www.agedcommunity.asn.au

Nominations close Friday 16 April 2010.

Western Australia

Calling for nominations, visit www.acswa.org.au

Nominations close Wednesday 21 April 2010.

Also holding seminars to assist with completion of nominations.

Queensland

Award nominations have now closed for Judging

Award Presentation to be held Thursday 18 March, ACQ State Conference, Conrad Jupiters, Gold Coast.

2010 HESTA Australian Nursing Awards

Acknowledge the best and brightest in your workplace – nominate them now for the 2010 HESTA Australian Nursing Awards.

Following the huge success of the 2009 Awards, HESTA Super Fund and major sponsor ME Bank are searching for a new group of amazing nominees. Your outstanding nurse, personal care attendant, assistant in nursing or nurse innovator can be nominated for one of three awards:

- Nurse of the Year – the winner receives a \$5,000 travel voucher plus a \$5,000 education grant
- Innovation in Nursing – the winner receives a \$10,000 development grant
- Graduate Nurse of the Year – the winner receives a \$2,500 travel voucher plus a \$2,500 education grant

Nominations close on 28 February 2010 and finalists will be flown to Melbourne for an Awards Ceremony at Crown Entertainment Complex on Thursday 13 May 2010 which will form part of International Nurses Week celebrations. For more information go to:

<http://www.hestanursingawards.com>.

Two Aged Care Financial Surveys

Concerns about inadequate aged care funding are supported with two new national industry surveys.

Accounting group *Bentleys* says the initial findings from its 2009 National Aged Care Financial Survey show that average profits have dropped below five per cent and the return on assets has fallen below two per cent.

The annual survey was based on the financial performance of over 340 facilities throughout 2008/2009.

The net profit margin for participating facilities was just 4.46 per cent. However liquidity in the sector is improving with 27.5 per cent of assets now held as current, up from 20.5 per cent in 2006.

The Bentleys survey also reveals a marked increase in providers' reliance on accommodation bonds, which now account for 27.12 per cent of the sector's total financing. It is expected that the full results from the 2009 Bentleys survey, including balance sheet health checks, will be available during March. For more information go to: <http://www.bris.bentleys.com.au>

The second - an inaugural survey conducted by *Deloitte* in partnership with the Aged Care Association of Australia, showed that most of the 137 respondents did not intend to make any further investments in their operations over the next five years with access to funding being the single greatest issue for all respondents. Available at: <http://www.deloitte.com.au>.

Productivity Commission Final Report on the Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector

The Productivity Commission recently released their final research report on the *Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector*. The report makes a number of recommendations which include:

- building a better knowledge base, through a national measurement framework and a Centre for Community Service Effectiveness
- smarter regulation, including a more coherent endorsement process for tax status to be administered by a proposed registrar, and a new definition of charities
- promoting giving through broader scope of gift deductibility, the promotion of planned giving and nationally harmonised fundraising regulation
- facilitating innovation and sector development through a variety of initiatives
- reforming government purchasing and contracting arrangements.

Some of the comments in this report are very similar to those in the Productivity Commission's report last year on *Annual Review of Regulatory Burdens on Business: Social and Economic Infrastructure Services*. ACSA will be advocating for consultation with the sector prior to the Government acting on the recommendations.

The full report is available at www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/not-for-profit/report

Homelessness National Quality Framework Consultations

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, (FaHCSIA) has begun a consultation process working with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and the organisations that deliver services to them, to develop a national quality framework (NQF) that will, over time, ensure a consistently high level of service quality for people experiencing homelessness in Australia. It has released a discussion paper as part of the process.

This consultation will be a two stage process:

The first stage is designed to start a discussion on the concept of a NQF and obtain views and ideas on its content. It includes a series of discussions with people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness and workshops in each state and territory with organisations that deliver services to people who are homeless. This step is aimed at obtaining your feedback on what quality service delivery is, what works well currently in assuring quality and what components could make up a NQF.

Second stage consultation will occur later in 2010 after Housing Ministers have considered these views and ideas on quality service delivery. Feedback from the first stage consultation will be used to identify several possible options for a NQF.

Another, more detailed discussion paper will describe those options and provide an analysis of their relative benefits. The issue of sector support and resource implications of a NQF will be explored at this time.

The link below is to the discussion paper, other information, and the workshop schedules.

http://fahcsia.gov.au/sa/housing/progserv/homelessness/national_quality_framework/Pages/default.aspx

Training Australia's Health Workforce

At the Australian Health Ministers' Conference on 12 February all Ministers committed to jointly plan through *Health Workforce Australia* for the quality clinical undergraduate training for all of our future health professionals.

This National Plan will boost the number of clinical training places available to help produce the next generation of doctors, nurses and allied health professionals. All jurisdictions have agreed to separate budget reporting as a first step to clearly identify in their budgets their commitment to maintaining effort. <http://www.hwa.gov.au>

The Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index

The Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI) has been designed to answer the question:

'By how much would after tax money incomes need to change to allow age pensioners and other households whose principal source of income is government benefits to purchase the same quantity of consumer goods and services that they purchased in the base period?' The PBLCI has been derived by combining the age pensioner Analytical Living Cost Index (ALCI) and the other government transfer recipient ALCI. Living cost indexes are intended to measure the impact of changes in prices on the out-of-pocket expenses incurred by these particular household types.

In the December quarter 2009 the PBLCI increased by 0.6%. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 0.5% over the same period. The PBLCI rose by 1.0% in the September quarter 2009. The year to date figure rose 2.7% through the year to December quarter 2009, compared to a through the year rise of 1.9% to September quarter 2009.

The most significant price rises this quarter were for food (+1.7%) and housing (+1.1%). The most significant offsetting price falls this quarter were for transportation (-1.1%) and health (-2.1%).

Weekly Income Support Payments for Vulnerable Australians

Vulnerable Australians will have the option to receive their regular income support payments weekly under legislation introduced into Parliament on 10 February. The Social Security and Family Legislation Amendment (Weekly Payments) Bill 2010 will help vulnerable people better manage their money, and forms part of the Rudd Government's response to homelessness and the White Paper, *The Road Home*.

Under the proposed changes, Centrelink officers will identify customers who have difficulties budgeting their payments across the fortnight, and offer the weekly payment option.

Aged Care Assessment Program

Aged Care Assessment Program - National Data Repository - Minimum Data Set Annual Report 2006-2007, and for 2007-2008, have been tabled in Federal Parliament.

ACSWA Aged Care Jobs Portal

ACSWA has launched its jobs portal in response to the unique challenges faced by the industry in Western Australia – namely an ongoing labour shortage, impacted further by an economy that is tipped to boom once again during 2010.

The portal offers a central base for WA’s aged care organisations to advertise job opportunities, in addition to offering potential candidates a simple method of applying for roles, learning more about the sector and gaining an insight into professional development and training opportunities.

The portal offers a mechanism for sourcing employees from across Australia and also internationally, with further information detailed on the site about WA’s lifestyle, visa requirements, and sponsorship and traineeships throughout the state.

The portal can be found at www.agedcarejobs.org.

NSW Care Workforce Campaign

The NSW Government says its television campaign encouraging people to consider working as carers (see story in *National Report* Issue 221) has proved a great success, with 1,000 applications for positions in disability services and community care in the two weeks the commercials have run.

Government research predicts that there will be 38,000 vacancies for paid carers in the state over the next five years as existing care staff retire and new jobs are created.

The multi-million dollar ad campaign is a joint initiative of the NSW Government and the National Disability Services (NDS) and was commissioned in response to the ageing population.

NDS’ NSW Manager Patrick Maher said the campaign aimed to support up to 750 care providers, which are able to place job advertisements on the ‘carecareers’ website for free. The three television ads, which began showing in late January, feature interactions between community care clients and their carers.

New Website Accessibility Standards for Government

Australians with disabilities will soon find it easier to access government information online. Minister for Finance and Deregulation Lindsay Tanner and Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities Bill Shorten said the Rudd Government had endorsed new website accessibility standards, the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.

Information about the guidelines and upcoming National Transition Strategy will be made available on the Web Publishing Guide: <http://webpublishing.agimo.gov.au/>

Not-for-profit Fraud Survey 2010 Report

The third biennial BDO not-for-profit survey has been released, building on the knowledge and experience gained from the 2006 and 2008 not-for-profit fraud surveys.

The results of this year's survey, combined with the information from previous surveys, provides an important benchmark for not-for-profit organisations by revealing the perception and level of fraud in the sector, examining specific incidences of fraud and highlighting the measures the sector is using to prevent fraud. Key findings include:

- There has been a decrease in fraud in the not-for-profit sector compared to previous surveys - 15% of respondents reported suffering a fraud in 2010, whilst in 2008 it was previously 16% in 2008 and 19% in 2006
- The number of respondents who see fraud as a problem in their organisation has declined to 14% from 20% in the 2008 survey
- Conversely, the number of respondents who do not see fraud as a problem for their organisation increased from 80% to 86%
- In addition, only 12% of respondents expect fraud to become a greater problem in the future
- 80% of respondents have reviewed their internal controls over the past two years.

<http://www.bdo.com.au/survey/not-for-profit/2010/>

Better Oral Health in Residential Aged Care Training.

DoHA has reported on the progress of the Nursing Home Oral and Dental Health Plan. It was announced by the Minister for Ageing on 1 March 2009 and is designed to strengthen dental and oral care in aged care facilities from the initial ACAT assessment through to care planning and management. The *Better Oral Health in Residential Aged Care Training* is one component of the Plan.

This training commenced in December 2009 and will continue throughout 2010, and involves:

- Two registered nurses/dedicated trainers in each aged care home, will be trained using a train-the-trainer model so that they in turn can train aged care workers in daily oral hygiene. The homes, services and aged care workers will receive practical training resources; and
- A self-learning package of tools and further resources will be provided to registered nurses to enable them to undertake: oral health assessment; oral health care planning; and appropriate dental referrals for residents.

The registered training organisations are also now contacting homes to let them know of the training schedule, and there has been a great deal of interest expressed amongst aged care homes. It is important that aged care homes recognise that the approach is the train-the-trainer model and select and send the appropriate staff for training. In most cases, it would be expected that the two staff attending the training would both be registered nurses. However, if a facility has a dedicated trainer who is not an RN but who could very competently deliver the training, it would be appropriate to send the trainer along with an RN.

It is important that at least one of the staff attending the training is an RN as one component of the training focuses on a self-directed learning tool to undertake oral health assessments and care plans, and it should also be made clear to the staff selected to undertake the training that this is a

train-the-trainer model and they will be expected to deliver the training once they return to the homes.

Oral Health Competency Standards for Health and Community Services Training Packages

The Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (ISC) is undertaking a project to develop new oral health competency standards for inclusion in the Health (HLT07) and/or Community Services (CHC08) Training Packages.

The competencies are being developed to describe work functions performed by the community services and health workforce that is broader than the oral health workforce sector, including nurses, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health workers, aged care workers and disability workers.

The National Oral Health Plan identifies greater participation in oral health services by the broader workforce. Development of these competencies has the potential to improve oral health outcomes and enable better access to oral health professionals for clients most in need.

Eight draft national oral health competency units are now ready for review and validation by industry stakeholders. During March and April 2010 the ISC will be conducting validation sessions in each state and territory to seek feedback on these units to ensure they address workplace requirements and allow workplaces to contextualise them appropriately. These new competencies can potentially be packaged as electives within qualifications of this broader workforce which may include aged care, disability and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health workers.

https://www.cshisc.com.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=362&Itemid=162&limit=1&limitstart=4P for the validation session dates in your state and to register.

eReferral Draft Specifications Available for Public Comment

The National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) has released the eReferral Draft Specifications for public comment. The NEHTA eReferral Program has been tasked to develop key specifications required for software vendors, general practitioners and specialists to establish a national environment for standardised electronic referral exchange, one where referrals can be sent securely and reliably to identified recipients, viewed by health care providers, and integrated into recipient clinical information systems.

Go to <http://www.nehta.gov.au>.

The documents can be found by expanding the section titled *Electronic Referrals Release 1.0*. The review period commenced on 16 February and will conclude on 30 April 2010.

The Ageing Bush

Senior treasury official Dr David Gruen has discussed the implications of a two age country in a speech reported in online newsletter *Crikey*.

"Australia is one of the most urbanised countries in the world; by 2020 more than 90% of Australians will live in urban areas. In terms of economic activity, Australia's major capital cities account for at least 65% of GDP. So it is likely that the quality of our cities has a significant

impact on national productivity growth... At present, younger people are attracted to education and employment opportunities in capital cities.”

“Older adults represent a growing proportion of the population outside of the capital cities. If these patterns continue, the older population risks becoming increasingly distanced from job opportunities and the workforce that will be required to deliver the services it needs,” he said.

http://www.treasury.gov.au/documents/1735/PDF/The_economic_outlook_and_challenges_for_the_Australian_economy.pdf?source=cmailer

Aromatherapists Want ACFI Change

The International Aromatherapy and Aromatic Medicine Association (IAAMA) is calling for aromatherapy to be listed as an allied health category under ACFI.

It claims that aged care residents have missed out on valuable treatment and aromatherapists have seen a significant decline in business since the introduction of ACFI.

IAAMA’s Ms Wright says that the transition to funding based on care needed has meant that many facilities have started offering aromatherapy as a fee-for-service option. “A lot of the residents don’t have money to pay for aromatherapy under a fee-for-service model,” she said. “And they say, ‘It was free for years, why should we pay now?’”

Veteran Health and Wellbeing Projects

The Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Alan Griffin, has announced more than \$1.3 million in funding to support 98 initiatives across Australia which will encourage veterans, war widows, widowers and their families to become involved in local health and wellbeing activities.

The funding will benefit some 41,000 veterans, war widows and widowers and their families by supporting a range of initiatives including health, nutrition and exercise sessions.

Veteran & Community Grants help fund local initiatives that improve access to community care services and encourage social interaction through Day Clubs, Men’s Sheds and social excursions.

“It is important that the veteran community has access to a range of programs where they can learn skills to help them remain independent and active, particularly for the elderly living by themselves,” Mr Griffin said.

Veteran & Community Grants are available to ex-service and community organisations, veteran representative groups and private organisations that contribute to the health and welfare of the veteran community.

Local and community organisations interested in applying for funding are encouraged to visit www.dva.gov.au/grants or contact their nearest DVA office on 133 254 (for metropolitan callers) or 1800 555 254 (for non-metropolitan callers).

Red Tape Cut for Veterans

The red tape facing Australia’s most disabled ex-serving personnel accessing income support has been cut in new changes announced on 18 February by the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Alan Griffin.

From March 2010, veteran pensioners assessed as Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) would be exempt from Centrelink medical reviews to access a Disability Support Pension. This immediately assists around 1100 veterans on a Centrelink Disability Support Pension and has the potential to benefit many more into the future.

Currently TPI pensioners undergo repeated Job Capacity Assessments to access and retain their Disability Support Pension.

Melbourne CAREX 2010 - Health & Aged Care Expo: March 18 & 19

For CEOs, DONs, managers, health/other professionals and all interested staff, Melbourne CAREX 2010 represents a unique opportunity for information, education, networking, review & investing. With its mix of product and service based exhibitors (120 sites), educational program and other activities, Melbourne CAREX 2010 is an event not to be missed.

For all information regarding Melbourne CAREX 2010 go to the CAREX section of www.totalagedservices.com.au or phone 03 9571 5606.

Aged & Community Services Australia
Level 1, 36 Albert Road, South Melbourne Vic 3205
Ph: 03 9686 3460
Email: info@agedcare.org.au www.agedccare.org.au