

The National Report

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Aged & Community Services Australia



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Not to Late to Register for ACSA's National Conference

Registrations are still flowing in for ACSA's national conference which starts in just over two week's time. You can register on line at: <http://www.acsa2009.com.au/>

Describe How to Lead the Way and Win a Navman at ACSA National Conference Perth 13-16 September

If you are leading the way in aged care, then TENA wants to know about it. During this year's ACSA Conference, TENA will be awarding a Navman GPS unit to the delegate who can best describe how they, or someone they know, is "Leading the Way" in aged care.

Keep a look out in the conference satchel for the TENA flyer. Fill out the information on the back, including how you or someone you know is leading the way in aged care. The winner will be announced on October 1, 2009 on www.TENA.com.au/professionals and have their entry posted on the TENA website, as well as being published in an ACSA post-conference report.

Health and Hospitals Reform

Prime Minister Rudd and Health and Ageing Minister Roxon have now been joined by Minister for Ageing Justine Elliot in their consultations around the country on health reform. Minister Roxon told attendees at a recent Victorian session that the Government had recently given the Productivity Commission a reference to look at the structure and regulation of aged care. Terms of reference for this have not yet been published.

Shadow Minister for Ageing to Leave Parliament

The Shadow Minister for Ageing, Margaret May will not contest the next federal election. She is bowing out of politics to provide support to her husband David, who has challenging health issues.

"I still believe very strongly that it is essential that Australia addresses the aged care crisis and provides world-class aged care for our aged and frail," she said in a statement announcing her decision.

She remains as Shadow Minister, however there has been political speculation about an Opposition frontbench reshuffle.

e-Health Developments

Two Federal Ministers have provided more details of the proposed national e-health program, at the recent Health-e-Nation conference in Canberra. Health and Ageing Minister Nicola Roxon said health IT was now "at the front and centre" of the new blueprint for health reform.

"With the states we have already committed to funding of \$208 million over next three years for the foundation work being done by the National E-Health Transition Authority and my department is working closely with NEHTA on e-prescribing, e-pathology, e-referrals and e-discharge," she said.

"The government together with the states is developing national legislation for a consistent approach to privacy across the country, and for the rollout of unique healthcare identifiers. By the middle of next year, all Australians will have been allocated a 16-digit healthcare identifier as a first step to building a secure e-health system.

"This will not replace the Medicare card, it will be a totally new number," she said.

Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy told the conference that “as our population continues to age, and Governments work to deal with a stressed hospital system, broadband will become an even more vital piece of the healthcare solution.”

“In-home care is a key way to deal with the challenge of an ageing population that expects independence.”

He quoted PricewaterhouseCoopers estimates that 20% of the population over 75 years old would benefit from in-home assistance supported by broadband, and studies showing that remote patient monitoring could reduce emergency room visits by up to 40 per cent and the length of hospital stays by up to 60 per cent.

He said that iSOFT, the world’s second biggest health software provider, recently told the Senate that the National Broadband Network could pay for itself “twice over” thanks to the e-health benefits. Integrated patient records across healthcare could save between eight and ten billion dollars a year – equating to a ten per cent saving in sector spending.

It says the NBN will resolve obstacles associated with connecting the health care industry today, such as large file transfers of CT scans and video conferencing.

Others referring to aged care at the conference included Peter Fleming, Chief Executive of NEHTA, who said that , “those suffering from chronic disease, indigenous Australians and those in aged care would derive significant immediate benefits. "The aged care sector has agreed that all new projects will be based on NEHTA's standards, and we're working closely with them to ensure those programs work well," Mr Fleming said.

"One of the early activities will be electronic medication management. There are 40,000 hospitalisations each year from aged care residences, and 30 per cent are related to adverse drug events. We believe at least 75 per cent of those can be prevented, so that's a priority.”

The Aged Care Industry Information Technology Council, of which ACSA is a member, has discussed electronic medication management in aged care with NEHTA. ACIITC has been promoting the use of common standards to allow interoperability between different software platforms used by individual aged care facilities, GPs and pharmacists. Future National Reports will detail progress in this area.

Internet Tools for Positive Ageing

Minister Elliot has launched two online tools developed by National Seniors Australia to help recognise and promote productive ageing in Australia. They are:

- The Productive Ageing Centre website – www.productiveageing.com.au - which provides users with research, education and information; and
- The Atlas of Productive Ageing, located at www.productiveageing.publichealth.gov.au that allows users to find regional information on five broad indicators of productive ageing – activity, health, finance, housing and population. This interactive site was developed by the Centre in collaboration with the Public Health Information Development Unit at the University of Adelaide.

Opposition Attacks Award Modernisation Process for Aged Care

The Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Michael Keenan has told Parliament that the award modernisation process had become a “ticking time bomb”. He called on the government to meet with representatives of the aged care industry to discuss the impacts of the award modernisation process and the possibility of a separate award, as it had already done for the restaurant and hospitality industry.

He cited the Government submission to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission as recognising “the extent of the crisis in the aged care sector.” The submission refers to transitional arrangements for the aged care industry. (see page 11 of the 16 page paper, dated 29 May).

It states that aged care... “is an industry of direct interest to the Government... The Government is committed to the long-term viability of aged care and considers that transitional provisions in modern awards are important to enable the industry to manage any change in labour costs. Therefore, the Government encourages the Commission to use the full five-year transition period available to allow the industry to absorb any changes in labour costs”.

The Government submission is at:

http://www.airc.gov.au/awardmod/databases/trans_prov/Submissions/DEEWR_trans_all.pdf

Community Care Report

Carers National Data Repository Scoping Study: Final Report Incorporating HACC use into aged care pathways: a technical report for the PIAC project

The Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) commissioned AIHW to undertake this study to investigate and document the scope, feasibility and utility of setting up a Carers National Data Repository. It was published on 18 August.

In general, the aged care program data used in the Pathways in Aged Care (PIAC) project relating to 105,000 older Australians contain dates of service use.

However, there are two complications with the Home and Community Care (HACC) data when integrating service use event data into care pathways: (a) the data available for the project only indicate quarters of service use, and (b) not all HACC agencies participate in the data collection.

This report describes how these matters are being treated for the PIAC project. Using this approach 72,000 PIAC cohort members had 107,000 periods during which they were accessing HACC services over the 4 years from July 2002.

To read more please visit the website <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10782>
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10785>

How to Reduce Impact of Dementia in Aged Care

Aged care facilities can significantly reduce the impact of the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia by addressing systemic and staffing issues, according to the coordinator of the NSW Southern Area Health Service’s aged mental health program, Dr Mike Bird.

Speaking at the Positive Living in Aged Care seminar in Sydney on 17 August Dr Bird said there was much potential for changing structural issues, such as staffing ratios and culture, and staff variables, like 'mental health literacy' and education.

Last year Dr Bird conducted a study based on focus groups of dementia care workers in three countries. Staff members were asked to talk about the aspects of their work which caused them stress and in all three countries, they reported that it was the first time they had been asked that question.

"We can't hope to ameliorate staff stress unless we understand its causes," Dr Bird said. "And that will differ from staff member to staff member."

The PLAC project was established by NSW Health's Older People's Mental Health Working Group and is jointly coordinated by the Aged and Community Services Association of NSW & ACT (ACS) and Aged Care Association Australia – NSW

New ABS Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index

The first Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI) (cat. no. 6467.0) from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) was released on 24 August.

The PBLCI shows a 0.1% increase in prices compared with the 0.5% increase reported in the CPI for the June quarter 2009. The PBLCI showed a 0.9% increase for the March quarter 2009, compared with 0.1% increase for the CPI.

The PBLCI will provide an alternate measure of price change to better reflect changes in living costs as they affect pensioners and other households receiving income from the government.

Further information is available in the *Information Paper: Introduction of the Pensioner Cost Living Index (PBLCI)* (cat. no 6466.0.0), which can be found on the ABS website www.abs.gov.au

Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA) Jenny Macklin said the PBLCI will better reflect price increases in goods commonly purchased by pensioners.

As part of the Australian Government's *Secure and Sustainable Pension Reform*, the base pension rate will be adjusted twice each year, in March and September, by whichever is the greater of the CPI or the PBLCI in the preceding six months. To keep pension rates in line with community living standards, they will also be benchmarked against wages as measured by Male Total Average Weekly Earnings (MTAWE).

As part of these reforms, the effective benchmark for single pensioners will increase from 25 to 27.7 per cent of MTAWE. She said the new pension rates will be released soon, and will reflect the improved indexation process and the specific pension increases announced in the May Budget.

Right to Refuse Treatment. Brightwater Care Group Court Decision

Much publicity has been given to the recent Western Australian court decision handed down on 20 August involving Brightwater Care and the right to refuse treatment.

The court considered whether Brightwater Care Group was legally obliged to comply with Mr Rossiter's direction to discontinue the provision of nutrition and general hydration through a percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy tube (PEG) with the result that he would die of starvation.

Mr Rossiter became quadriplegic after a fall in March 2008 and has been a resident of Brightwater since November 2008. He has no movement and is totally dependent on others for the provision of the necessities of life. He is however mentally competent, and could continue to live for many years with the necessary services.

The Court held that if after a medical practitioner explained the consequences of ceasing to administer nutrition and hydration Mr Rossiter requested that Brightwater cease the administration, then Brightwater could not lawfully continue administering it and would not be criminally responsible for any consequences to his life or health.

The Court further held that any person providing palliative care to Mr Rossiter on the terms specified in the Criminal Code (WA) would not be criminally responsible for providing that care notwithstanding that it was necessary because of Mr Rossiter's informed decision to discontinue the treatment necessary to sustain his life.

Commenting on the case, Dr Scott Blackwell from Palliative Care WA Inc warned people not to confuse Mr Rossiter's case with euthanasia.

Dr Blackwell says the case is not about murder laws, but about the right of the state's residents to refuse treatment.

"All Western Australians with legal decision-making capacity have the right to refuse medical treatment ... courts in Australia and overseas have long considered artificial feeding - for example by a PEG tube - a medical treatment," he said.

<http://decisions.justice.wa.gov.au/supreme/supdcns.nsf/c04d382e733a94a148256fc4002b2e2b/2b90af60d3ed4c8cc825761800150b11?OpenDocument>

Hazel Hawke Placed in Care as Alzheimer's Disease Worsens

Joe Hildebrand, in Sydney's *The Daily Telegraph*, has written on 22 August that Hazel Hawke, the ex wife of the former Prime Minister has, eight years after being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, been placed in high-level care after her condition deteriorated and her family could no longer support her.

Alzheimer's Australia head Glenn Rees, a close friend, said the decision had been an extremely difficult one for the family to take. "For the Hawke family, as for many others, residential care became the choice of necessity," he said.

For more information on Alzheimer's or to donate to the Hazel Hawke Foundation visit www.alzheimers.org.au

Homelessness and people with dementia or cognitive impairment project

Take this quick survey, and help people working in and using housing and homeless services!

Alzheimer's Australia has commissioned the Brotherhood of St Laurence to undertake this project, which has been funded by the Department of Health and Ageing through the National Dementia Support Program.

The purpose of the project is to support housing and homeless service workers so that they can respond to people with dementia or cognitive impairment who access their services. We will be developing a dementia practice guide for housing and homeless workers to help them support this client group.

When you take this survey, your responses will help us improve the quality of this practice guide. This survey will help us build a picture of the current knowledge and skills of housing and homeless service workers. It will also tell us about how many of you out there are working with clients who have dementia or cognitive impairment.

The survey is quick, easy, and should only take about ten minutes. If you have any questions, want to learn about the project, or want to pass on your views, you can contact Lauren Siegmann at the Brotherhood of St Laurence. Her number is (03) 9483 1368 and her email is lsiegmann@bsl.org.au. She is happy to hear from you.

Click on this link to get started:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=WB3F771z3RKdfTkqODvtRA_3d_3d

Audits of General Accounts of Aged Care Providers

The Senate on 19 August has called for the tabling of national de-identified data from audited General Purpose Accounts collected by the Department from aged care providers since the 2004-05 financial year. This information was planned to assist in performance benchmarking and in industry planning and investment decisions.

Volunteer Grants 2009 - Call for Applications Now Open

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA) currently has \$21 million available for Volunteer Grants 2009.

Volunteer Grants 2009 provides funding for eligible not-for-profit organisations to support their volunteers and encourage volunteering by purchasing practical and tangible small equipment items to help volunteers, or contributing towards the reimbursement of volunteers' fuel costs incurred when carrying out their volunteering work.

Organisations can apply for grant funding of a minimum of \$1,000 up to a maximum of \$5,000. Applications will be assessed and prioritised according to how strongly they meet the selection criteria. Eligibility and selection criteria, as well as other essential information about Volunteer Grants 2009 are provided in the Volunteer Grants 2009 Application Guidelines.

www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/funding/Pages/volunteer_grant09.aspx

Applications close Friday, 25 September 2009 at 5pm AEST.

Local Palliative Care Grants Program - Round 5 - Dementia

The Department of Health and Ageing is seeking applications from health related services/ organisations/consortia to develop better palliative and end of life care for people with a mental illness, Alzheimer's disease or other dementias.

Grants of between \$200,000 and \$600,000 (GST inclusive) will be made available for projects of up to 18 months duration over the 2009-10 and 2010-11 financial years.

Applicants will be required to demonstrate how the funding will be used to improve the quality of palliative care to the targeted population through improved and sustainable change to practice. The projects will be required to cover more than one geographical region.

Projects funded under this round of the Local Palliative Care Grants Program will be expected to address one or more of the following objectives:

- Develop innovative and/or best practice models of care,
- Improve palliative care service delivery to people who have a mental illness, Alzheimer's disease or other dementias, and
- Assist sustainable change to improve the delivery of palliative and end of life care services.

Organisations or consortia able to meet the following criteria are invited to apply:

- Ability to manage a project across two or more geographical regions,
- Knowledge and understanding of palliative care and palliative care service provision,
- Knowledge and understanding of the primary health care system and of the acute care hospital system,
- Previous administrative experience on a similar scale.

The anticipated period of the grants will be from 1 January 2010 to 30 June 2011. Applications for funding must be received by 2pm on Wednesday 30 September 2009 in Canberra.

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/grant0520910>

Drug Usage Reduced

Designed to improve appropriate use of benzodiazepines in aged care facilities, a six-month intervention initiative conducted by the University of Tasmania's School of Pharmacy found that education and staff training helped lower their use in selected Hobart aged care facilities from 32 per cent to 27 per cent.

Project leader and pharmacy lecturer Juanita Westbury said the Reducing Use of Sedatives (RedUSE) project was inspired by a need to develop improved methods of sedative medication use in the state's nursing homes, where their average use rate in 2006 - 43 per cent - was three times the reported rate in Sydney.

"There was a lack of education and a lot of the nursing staff were very uninformed about these medications." The pharmacist that supplied each aged care home that was involved was the one doing the training and the one measuring use and also the pharmacist was really well placed because they had a lot of contact with that particular aged care home," Ms Westbury said.

Details at <http://www.pharmacynews.com.au/article/pharmacists-central-in-sedative-use-project/495297.aspx>

Hospital in the Home Study

A new study, in the August edition of the *Australian Health Review*, found that more involvement by doctors in Hospital in the Home (HITH) programs can decrease the need for hospital visits.

"In 1994, Hospital in the Home was introduced in Australia, driven by efforts to improve the efficiency of hospital bed management. HITH can enable patients to remain in a familiar setting, close to family and in their community while they receive treatment," one of the researchers, Dr Anh Tran, staff specialist, at Werribee Mercy Hospital, said.

"HITH has also been shown to result in lower running costs, less confusion, fewer urinary and bowel complications and decreased hospital-acquired infection.

BDO not-for-profit fraud survey 2010

BDO Kendalls is seeking participants for its 2010 BDO not-for-profit fraud survey. The survey provides a benchmark for not-for-profit organisations revealing the perception and level of fraud in the sector, examining specific incidences of fraud and what the sector is doing to prevent fraud occurring. Fraud is an issue that effects every organisation, and the survey results provide a guide as to how fraud is occurring and the key methods that have worked in discovering fraud. The final report will be released in February 2010.

Take the survey at https://vovici.com/wsb.dll/s/f234g3f15d?utm_source=Not-For-Profit+News&utm_campaign=ea256d328a-NFP+News+Aug09&utm_medium=email

ACSA Agendas Bumper Conference Issue - Out Now

Agendas is published by ACSA and distributed by State Associations to all members, and to a growing number of subscribers. Its publication is supported by a grant from the Community Sector Support Scheme of the Department of Health and Ageing.

Issue 51, Spring 2009 features articles on nurse practitioners in aged care, cultural and linguistic diversity - spirituality and ageing, pandemic reports, and recent research in aged care. Because it is a special conference bumper issue (and will also be inserted in conference satchels), a number of ACSA's conference sponsors, national partners, and corporate supporters have contributed articles of interest to our industry.

Make sure you read the latest issue: if you don't see it, perhaps consider subscribing for extra copies. Details at: www.agedcare.org.au/PUBLICATIONS-&-RESOURCES/Agendas.html.

Arts and Ageing Creativity: Unlocking the Potential Conference Adelaide 21-23 October

Hosted by the Society for the Arts in Dementia Care (Australia) Inc and ACSA SA & NT Inc, the Conference – the first of its kind in Australasia- will focus on the value of active participation in the creative arts for older people.

The \$500 Early Bird registration rate applies until 9 September for the two-day event. Details at www.alloccasionsgroup.com/CECD09

Ageing Safely Forum: Adelaide from 22-23 October 2009

This forum is being presented by the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, in partnership with the Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre, the University of South Australia and the Older Women's Network NSW.

It brings together key policy makers and services across a range of sectors to focus on developing and implementing effective inter-agency protocols to address the abuse of older people in their homes with an innovative national approach.

Online registration available through <https://www.secureregistrations.com/AgeingSafely09/>

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