

The National Report

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Aged & Community Services Australia



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ACSA 2009 National Conference

September 13-16, 2009 Perth, Western Australia

All Dressed Up?... There's Somewhere to Go

Australia's largest aged care event, ACSA's National Conference, is all set to go next week from the 13-16 September. Our 2009 Organising Committee has put together a fantastic program, around 1,000 people have already registered and our 100 exhibitors will be showing and telling all the latest in products and services in the Trade Exhibition.

If you have left your plans until the 11th hour- perhaps you had accreditation taking up some of your time- you can still make it. Discount fares as low as \$481 (ex Melbourne) return are still available, and you can register at the Perth Convention Centre when you arrive if you prefer.

Laurie Lawrence - Confirmed Presenter in Perth

Laurie Lawrence, Former Australian Rugby Union Representative, Olympic and World Champion Swim Coach, has confirmed his involvement as a keynote speaker at the Conference.

There would be few, who do not know of Laurie Lawrence or his spirited personality, his sense of humour or his zest for life. For those who know him well there would be no disputing that his manner is direct, sincere and honest.

During his distinguished career, Laurie has been honoured with many awards. In 1988 he was voted All Sports "National Coach of the Year" in the Sports Australia Awards conducted by the prestigious Confederation of Australian Sports. Australia Day 1989 saw Laurie presented with an Australian Achievers Award to honour his selection by the National Australia Day Council as an Australian of the Year finalist. A rare honour indeed!

The business world and the competitive sports arena make similar demands for high individual achievement, which explains why Laurie today is one of the most sought-after motivational speakers in Australia.

Laurie will replace Li Cunxin, who has withdrawn from the ACSA 2009 National Conference due to an unforeseen international commitment.

Registration for the Conference is still open, please visit www.acsa2009.com.au for further information, or to register.

Governor General Promotes Ageing and Aged Care

The Governor General, Quentin Bryce, has said ageing ought to be seen as a natural part of life, in a speech she made to the Sydney Institute on 1 September.

"There is no doubt that the process presents a range of challenges, most of them randomly dished out among us," she said.

"How we care for our growing elderly population, whatever extra burdens they might bear in their later years, is a manifest sign of the health, well-being, and humanity of our entire nation".

Ms Bryce paid tribute to aged care facilities in outback communities and for the high quality of care they provide and the way in which they foster intergenerational interactions.

“They share afternoon tea, sing to them, read books on their beds, and push their chairs in the gardens.”

“We must look after what we have. When I visit inland and remote towns, I often stop by at the aged care centre. Some of those tiny places do it so well. There might be a kindergarten, a school, and a nursing home all within coo-ee of one another, and all connected and involved with the wider community. “

“The kids see their grandparents and great aunts and uncles on their way home from school. They share afternoon tea, sing to them, read books on their beds, and push their chairs in the gardens. “ Her full speech is at <http://www.gg.gov.au/governorgeneral/speech.php?id=597>.

Award Modernisation Update

The Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) Full Bench has handed down a decision on modern awards and how they will be phased in over the next five years.

The AIRC did not accept the Aged Care Industry Council and Australian Government submissions which asked to consider that the full five years be utilised in transitioning the modern awards in the Aged Care Industry. Instead it has ruled that:

- Phasing in should commence on 1 July 2010. The effect will be that where the phasing in provisions are included in an award, the pre-modern award conditions relating to minimum wages, casual and part-time loadings, Saturday, Sunday, public holiday, evening and other penalties and shift allowances will continue to apply until **1 July 2010** when the modern award obligations will commence.
- The phasing in will be spread over five amounts of 20 % starting 1 July 2010 and then four additional amounts each year at 1 July each year ending 1 July 2014. The matters to be phased in include minimum wages, including wages for junior employees; employees to whom training arrangements apply and employees with a disability; casual and part-time loadings; Saturday, Sunday, public holiday, evening and other penalties; and shift allowances.
- Other allowances not mentioned above will be phased in at 1 July 2010.
- The nauseous allowance will be phased in on January 2011 to allow employers time to review work practices and, where necessary, to renegotiate cleaning/laundry contracts. The allowance only applies if employees have to directly handle linen of an unusually dirty or offensive nature and not sealed in airtight containers.

There will be opportunity for the AIRC to review these awards and parties to these awards to make application to vary these awards.

The ACSA National Workplace Relations Advisory Committee has discussed the decision and will make a further submission to the AIRC.

ACSA CEO Greg Mundy said in a media release on 28 August that award modernisation was just another hurdle for aged care, and is likely to have a significant negative impact on the aged care industry.

If the awards impacting on aged care currently being considered by the Commission are adopted, they will inflict inflexible and prescriptive conditions on the delivery of care and services, he said .

“The Federal Government has stressed that no one should be worse off under the new awards which are meant to be cost neutral. However implementation of the awards will in all likelihood have a significant cost impact for a range of residential and community care providers, who operate on tight margins and have little capacity to absorb additional expense.

At the very least the maximum transition period of five years will be required for implementation of the new awards.

The National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission Report has addressed a broad range of issues affecting the delivery of aged care services. Many of the terms and conditions in the new awards have the potential to inhibit these much needed reforms and thereby further delay a visionary approach to aged care.”

Fair Work Australia - Free Information Sessions

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations has provided joint funding to the ACSA Federation and ACAA to run 46 public information sessions around Australia explaining the new workplace relations legislation. In addition, both ACQ and ACSWA will be running on-line Elluminate sessions for those not able to attend in person.

We will also be developing 14 Fact Sheets with important information on some of the key issues around the new legislation. At least four of these, with the most relevance to employees, will be translated into several languages. Check the state association websites for information on the times and dates of the information sessions.

Aged Care Facilities Left Out in the Cold on Insulation and Solar Power Rebates

Australia’s aged care facilities have been left out in the cold by the Federal Government’s derisory insulation and solar power rebates under the Energy Efficient Homes scheme, Greg Mundy said in commenting on the solar rebates scheme.

Six months ago the Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot, urged nursing homes and hostel operators to apply for the rebates, he said.

“The Minister enthusiastically stated that ‘insulation will increase comfort for residents and save nursing home operators money, as well as helping tackle climate change’.

However, it transpired that these facilities were entitled to the same rebate that applies to a single dwelling. When challenged on the obvious inadequacy of the rebate, the Minister promised a review and consultation. Now, after six months of waiting for the issue to be resolved, we have learned there is to be no change, not from the Minister, but via the Department’s website.

“Minister Elliot may believe it is acceptable to run ‘hot and cold’ on aged care issues but for older Australians the cold and the heat they feel are very real. Why can’t aged care facilities receive a real insulation rebate Minister Elliot?” the ACSA media release concluded.

Also the rebate scheme was amended recently. The insulation rebate for renters was increased from \$1,000 to \$1,600 to bring it in line with the amount available to home owners. However the guidelines were amended to state that applicants can longer apply for both the insulation and solar rebate – it is one or the other.

For more details on the scheme go to: <http://www.environment.gov.au/energyefficiency/index.html>

Varying the Amount of an Accommodation Bond with an Existing Resident

The Department has written to providers advising that the amount of an accommodation bond can be varied by mutual agreement between a provider and a resident, provided that any revised amount is not more than the maximum that applied at the time of the person's entry to care.

Any agreed increase in a bond amount should be associated with an improvement in accommodation for the resident — for example, the resident moving from a shared to a single room.

This does not alter the requirement of the Act that a person transferring between providers cannot be charged as a bond an amount that is greater than the bond balance refundable by the provider they are transferring from either at the time of transfer or thereafter.

For further information contact the Aged Care Information Line on 1800 500 853 or go to:
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-mailfax-2009-0109.htm>

Pension Changes

The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin has detailed pension changes, increases and payments to apply from 20 September 2009. This increase includes the rise announced in the May Budget, as part of the Australian Government's *Secure and Sustainable Pension Reform*, plus regular indexation.

Single pensioners on the maximum rate of the pension will receive:

- An increase of \$60 per fortnight (\$30 a week) in the base pension;
- An increase of \$5.00 per fortnight (\$2.50 a week) in the new Pension Supplement; and
- Indexation increases of \$5.50 per fortnight in the base pension and \$0.33 per fortnight in the

Pension Supplement

This is a total increase for single pensioners on the maximum rate of \$70.83 per fortnight, bringing total pension payments to \$671.90 a fortnight.

Couple pensioners combined on the maximum rate of the pension will receive:

- An increase of \$20.30 per fortnight (\$10.15 a week) in the new Pension Supplement; and
- Indexation increases of \$9.20 per fortnight in the base pension and \$0.43 per fortnight in the

Pension Supplement.

This is a total increase for couple pensioners combined on the maximum rate of \$29.93 per fortnight, bringing total pension payments to \$1,013 per fortnight.

Pension Supplement

The increased Pension Supplement will be paid fortnightly from 20 September. The Pension Supplement replaces, and incorporates the full value of the Utilities Allowance, Telephone Allowance (at the higher internet rate), the GST Supplement and the Pharmaceutical Allowance. The maximum Pension Supplement is \$56.10 per fortnight for singles and \$84.60 per fortnight for couples combined.

Pensioners will also receive their final quarterly payment of Utilities Allowance and Telephone Allowance with their regular pension payment after 20 September. From 1 July 2010, pensioners will be able to choose to take around half of the new Pension Supplement in quarterly instalments.

Indexation

As part of the pension reforms, a new Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI) was developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Pension base rates are now indexed to the higher of the increases in the PBLCI or the Consumer Price Index (CPI) over the previous six months. In the six months to June 2009 the PBLCI rose by 1.0 per cent. The CPI rose by 0.6 per cent over the same period.

Pensions are also benchmarked against wages as measured by Male Total Average Weekly Earnings (MTAWE), to keep pension rates in line with community living standards. Currently the benchmark for singles is 25 per cent, and following the \$30 a week increase in the base pension, the benchmark will rise to 27.7 per cent at the next indexation point in March 2010.

The new PBLCI has resulted in a higher pension indexation increase in September than either the CPI or MTAWE. This will deliver a higher rate of indexation of \$0.90 per fortnight for singles and \$1.40 per fortnight for couples combined than would otherwise have occurred under the previous arrangements.

Other income support payments

Due to regular indexation, an estimated 1.1 million people in receipt of entitlements such as the Newstart Allowance, Partner Allowance, Sickness Allowance, Widows Allowance, Parenting Payment (Partnered and Single) will also receive an increased payment.

Pensioners will receive a letter from Centrelink soon detailing exactly how the pension changes will affect them.

Veterans' Affairs pensioners will also receive pension increases of the same amounts, subject to the passage of legislation currently before the Parliament.

Full details of the changes to rates and thresholds are available at www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/index_table_200909.htm

Market Rates for Temporary Skilled Overseas Workers

The Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, on 6 September announced details of the requirement for temporary skilled overseas workers to be paid market salary rates. The payment of market rates will ensure subclass 457 visa holders are on the same wages and conditions of employment as those provided to an Australian worker undertaking equivalent work in the same workplace.

Where there is an equivalent Australian worker in the workplace, the market rate will be determined by the industrial arrangements that apply to this worker – for example, a collective agreement, award, award conditions with above award salary rates or a common law contract.

Where there is no equivalent worker onsite, the employer may reference collective agreements or awards for that position to substantiate the market rate. If there is no applicable agreement or award, other evidence such as remuneration surveys or earnings data must be provided.

Market salary rates will apply to all new subclass 457 visa holders from 14 September 2009 except where annual earnings of \$180 000 or more are proposed.

Visas will not be granted to new subclass 457 visa applicants if the market salary rate for the position is below a Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold of \$45 220. The threshold will be indexed in line with ABS earnings data.

Veteran Health and Wellbeing Projects

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs Alan Griffin announced on 4 September more than \$1.2 million in funding Veteran & Community Grants program under the to support 78 health and wellbeing initiatives for veterans and their families across Australia.

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 <http://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).

Australia's Occupational Health and Safety Record

A progress report issued by Safe Work Australia, the Federal Government agency charged with reducing workplace injuries and disease, states that self-imposed targets for reducing serious injury claims have not been met.

The report shows the injury rates in health and community services are failing to reach international benchmarks. The report also reveals the aged care industry is not meeting OHS benchmarks.

According to the interim report on the National OHS Strategy 2002-2012, Australia failed to meet the target of a 20% reduction in the incidence of serious injury and musculoskeletal claims. In comparison with seven other OECD nations, Australia has only slightly improved its work-related injury fatality rate since the start of the decade, to two deaths per 100,000 workers.

Community Hosts for Sites Sought for Free Broadband Internet for Seniors

The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, on 3 September unveiled the first of the Australian Government's free internet kiosks for seniors . Under the Australian Government's *Broadband for Seniors* initiative, \$15 million is being invested over three years to install up to 2000 kiosks across the country.

Forty-two kiosks are already operating, with many in regional and rural areas. Over the coming months hundreds of kiosks will be online across the country.

People aged 50 and over will be better connected to family, friends and the technological age with free computer training and internet access available across Australia. The kiosks are accessible to all seniors, including older citizens with disabilities and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, through the use of specific language software and assistive technology.

The Australian Government, NEC Australia, Adult Learning Australia, the Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association and the University of the Third Age Online are working together to provide this free service.

More community organisations are being sought to host kiosks, including computers, a broadband internet service and training materials. Community organisations who wish to be involved can call the *Broadband for Seniors* hotline on 1300 795 897 or visit <http://www.necseniors.net.au/> for more information.

ACT Aged Care CEO Honoured

The Australian Graduate School of Entrepreneurship (AGSE) has inducted the CEO of Canberra's Goodwin Aged Care Services into its Hall of Fame.

Bruce McKenzie was recognised in the Social Entrepreneurship category, in recognition of his work in the aged care and housing sectors over many years.

The AGSE's Hall of Fame was launched in 2006 and each year it recognises six Australians who have shown outstanding innovation and entrepreneurial spirit in a range of fields including business, technology and community development.

Before joining Goodwin six years ago, Mr McKenzie worked for Canberra's first affordable housing provider and he has since applied many of those ideas in aged care.

He said aged care providers need to work creatively to provide high quality services to customers in the current climate.

"It is a challenge to meet current expectations with the buildings we provide using the current funding model," Mr McKenzie said.

Health and Hospitals Reform

Since the last *National Report*, the Federal Government has released the final report of the Preventative Health Taskforce and the draft National Primary Health Care Strategy, which along with the final report of the National Health and Hospitals Reform, were presented to the Australian Health Ministers' meeting in Canberra on 4 August.

The reports can be found at the <http://www.yourhealth.gov.au>

Health and Wellbeing in Ageing.

The Royal College of Nursing Australia (RCNA) has launched a new faculty that will focus on health and wellbeing in ageing. It follows the other two RCNA faculties of Rural Nursing and Midwifery, and Community and Primary Health Care.

The new faculty will aim to promote the role of nursing in the support of older people and to increase aged care research.

The 12 member group, comprising academics, management, clinical and grassroots professionals will hold its first meeting on 29 September and will advise the RCNA on policy directions and develop research opportunities. Further details will be made available on www.rcna.org.au

Government to Provide \$11 million to Charitable and Nonprofit Organisations

The Australian Government announced on 27 August it will provide \$11 million to charitable and non-profit organisations to enable them to continue to deliver valuable community services to the disadvantaged during the economic downturn.

It also released a report it commissioned, undertaken by the Centre for Corporate Public Affairs, on the Impact of the economic downturn on not-for-profit organisation management. This revealed that more Australians under financial pressure are turning to community organisations for help.

Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan - Social Housing Initiative Stage Two

The Australian Government on 1 September approved over \$5 billion worth of projects under the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan Social Housing Initiative. The \$4.546 billion allocated as Stage Two follows \$692 million of projects approved under Stage One in April.

These projects are the biggest ever investment in social housing in Australia, and will see around 19,200 new homes added to the public and community housing stock by 2012. Three quarters of these projects are to be completed by December 2010.

Mobility Scooter Deaths Warning and Meeting

Peter Kell, Deputy Chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission said on 28 August that a meeting will be held in Canberra on 17 September to discuss the rising number of deaths associated with Mobility Scooters.

The National Coroner's Information system has identified 71 deaths and thousands of injuries since 2000 and in *National Report No 209* noted the Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs, Dr. Craig Emerson 's formal danger warning about the safety of motorised mobility scooters

The meeting will include business and consumer representatives, injury research organisations and government agency representatives and will hear presentations on safety concerns as well as discussing potential solutions.

Broadband Enabling Better Chronic Disease Management

The Minister for Broadband, Communications and Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy, on 4 September launched a new e-health project improving chronic disease patient care.

“CDM-Net is a great example of the digital revolution taking place in healthcare as the Government establishes Australia's 21st century broadband foundation,” Senator Conroy said.

“Patient care plans are an important part of chronic disease management and providing online and real-time collaboration means they are easier and more effective to use.”

Digital Regions Initiative online: www.dbcde.gov.au/digitalregions

Carbon Reporting

As at August 2009, all Australian Corporations generating in excess of 87.5kt of CO₂e per annum, or consuming (or producing) 350Tj of energy per annum, are required to register with the Department of Climate Change for reporting in October. All Facilities generating 25kt of CO₂e, or consuming (or producing) 10Tj of energy are also required to report.

The threshold for Corporations will be reduced next year so that the NGER Act will include reports from organisations generating 50kt of CO₂e, or consuming (or producing) 200Tj of energy per annum. The threshold for Facilities is not expected to change.

It is highly unlikely that any aged care provider would be required to register and report as the scheme is targeted to Australia’s largest companies. However you can check by using the calculator on the website. For more details go to: <http://www.nger.com.au/environmental-reporting/nger.html>

E-learning

As previously advised in the National Report ACSA is changing direction in our e-learning involvement. The e-learning partnership with Learning Seat has now formally finished and the course has been removed from our website. However those who are already undertaking a course have until 20 November to complete it. If you have any queries please contact Mary Chan at ACSA on 03 96863460 or mchan@agedcare.org.au

Keeping Dementia Front of Mind: Incidence and Prevalence 2009 - 2050.

This report by Access Economics, commissioned by Alzheimers’ Australia has found that the number of Australians with dementia is expected to quadruple to more than 1.1 million people by 2050,

“Without a significant medical breakthrough, the number of Australians with dementia is expected to increase from 245,000 in 2009 to 591,000 in 2030 and again to a staggering 1,130,000 by 2050,” Glenn Rees from Alzheimers’ Australia said.

“Every week there are more than 1,300 new cases of dementia. By 2030 there will be more than 3,600 and by 2050, about 7,400 new cases each week. The dementia epidemic is here. Dementia is a fatal disease and as yet there is no cure.” The report is at <http://www.alzheimers.org.au/upload/EstimatesProjectionsNational.pdf>

My Generation: Are Australian Baby Boomers the Retiring Kind?

The National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre has released this report , which brings together the research evidence on the retirement plans and expectations of Australian baby boomers from several key studies undertaken over the past four years.

Baby boomers represent 25 per cent of the Australian population, with nearly 5.6 million baby boomers scheduled to phase into retirement over the next 15 years and nearly half (46 per cent) expect to be partially reliant on the age pension. By 2030, all baby boomers will be 65 or older. The report can be accessed at www.productiveageing.com.au

Innovative financing for home ownership

This peer reviewed publication by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) looks at shared equity arrangements and consumer views of existing and possible schemes. It reports that, to date, government interest has translated in practice into a number of significant although relatively modest schemes; and product development has largely been left to the banks and financial providers.

The focus of these emerging products has not necessarily been simply on improving access to affordable home ownership for targeted groups unable to access home ownership via normal purchasing arrangements.

This points to the need for clear policy frameworks within which home ownership assistance schemes and financial products can be positioned and supported. It also recognises that the feasibility and potential success of such approaches will relate to wider policy objectives in terms of housing affordability, encouraging access to home ownership, and the creation of strong and sustainable communities.

This AHURI Final Report No. 137 ISSN: 1834-7223 can be downloaded at www.ahuri.edu.au/publications

UK Success with Telehealth

GPs at the Orchard Medical Centre in Bristol, UK have reported the success of telehealth at improving care outcomes, medication compliance, self care and independence for patients with chronic heart failure.

Using Tunstall Healthcare's RTX telehealth monitor, district nurses were able to remotely monitor patients' vital signs, such as weight, blood pressure, ECG and peak flow to quickly detect abnormalities and notify the patients' GP of the potential onset of an emergency incident.

On a daily basis, the RTX prompted patients to take their vital signs and answer a series of health related questions, lessening their need to visit the GP practice or hospital to manage and understand their own healthcare

The practice integrated telehealth into their chronic heart failure service to provide community based preventative support that would reduce some of the burden on secondary care providers while providing a cost effective health management approach.

If you would like additional information on telehealth in Australia or a copy of the Orchard Medical Centre case study visit www.tunstallhealthcare.com.au or call 1300 760 333.

The Role of Departmental Secretaries: Personal Reflections on the Breadth of Responsibilities Today

This book, written by former Health Department Secretary and Public Service Commissioner Andrew Podger is an inside-Canberra memoir/commentary on the Australian Public Service. Bernard Keane, writing in *Crikey online* about the book notes that, as a Departmental Head dismissed by the Howard Government Podger has been more open about his experience under the Howard Government than would normally be the case of an ex-Secretary, but without breaching too many confidences. As a result, there are plenty of anecdotes to intrigue those interested in what happened behind closed doors during the Howard years. For example:

- Michael Wooldridge - who evidently impressed Podger as a committed and intelligent minister - lobbied his Cabinet colleagues hard for a significant and ongoing but got no support.
- Relations between Wooldridge and Aged Care Minister Bronwyn Bishop broke down sufficiently badly that Podger's department had to act as a relay between them during the critical budget process in 1999.
- Bishop tried to block the Department of Health annual report for 2000-01 on the basis that it was "her report" and contained data she did not wish published. Podger had to remind her it was a statutorily-required report from him to Parliament.
- During the "kerosene baths" affair, PM&C head Max Moore-Wilton ordered Podger to move into Bishop's office, Bishop having previously complained about Podger's failure to give her sufficient personal support. Howard's office told Podger he "needed to take a baseball bat to your department".
- Podger had to resist efforts from Howard's office and PM&C to interfere with his review of health services delivery in 2005, including directions not to speak to certain experts considered hostile to the Government.

Podger regards the APS now - particularly after the Howard Government's *Public Service Act 1999*, which he sees as a model piece of public service regulation - as more responsive and accountable Service than that of 30 years ago. Nevertheless, he wants the APS strengthened through a series of improvements:

- A stronger, more involved Public Service Commissioner
- Secretaries to have some expertise in their portfolio
- Formal management training for senior SES and future Secretaries, as well as the promotion of skill-sharing networks by central agency heads
- The need to for Secretaries to cultivate external and even international networks
- The need to allocate resources, and fit within strategic planning frameworks, longer-term policy research and development (an area that suffered serious harm across the APS during the Howard years).

Statins increase fall risk

Source: ABC online

Commonly prescribed cholesterol medications are being blamed for reducing muscle strength and increasing the chance of falls. The Menzies Research Institute in Tasmania has uncovered concerning side effects of statins, a class of drugs used for lowering cholesterol. It has been known for some time that the drugs cause muscle aches and pains. But Professor Graeme Jones said a recent

study found the drugs affect both muscle performance and reaction time. "In our study we've looked at just over 800 people randomly selected from the general population," he said. "We found there was muscle decline in patients on statins, that there was an increase in falls risk over time." In Tasmania, 25 per cent of people over the age of 50 are using statins.

Alzheimer's gene

Source: Courier Mail

Scientists have found three new major genetic links to Alzheimer's, affecting up to 20 percent of people with the brain-wasting disease, and said it was the most significant such discovery in 15 years. Two large studies found that the three new genes join the better-known APOE4 gene as significant risk factors for the most common cause of dementia. "If we were able to remove the detrimental effects of these genes through treatments, we could reduce the proportion of people developing Alzheimer's by 20 percent," Julie Williams, a professor of Neuropsychological Genetics at Britain's Cardiff University, said. Alzheimer's disease affects more than 26 million people globally, has no cure and no good treatment. The need for effective remedies is pressing, with the number of cases forecast to go beyond 100 million by 2050.

<http://www.nature.com>

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