



Aged & Community Services  
SA & NT Inc

## 2009-2010 SA State Budget Information & Initiatives Sheet

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**Topic name:**

Equipment and Assistive Technology

**Background/ Rationale:**

Specialised equipment and assistive technology benefit both older people and the workforce. It enables older people to continue living as independently as possible and maximises their quality of life. Specialist equipment and technology assists staff to better support older people, and assists in maintaining their functioning as staff members and can extend their working life.

The current equipment and assistive technology provision arrangement is discontinuous with little coordination of provision across the various stakeholder groups.

**Initiatives/ Actions Required:**

- Co-ordinate equipment provision across all stakeholder groups (e.g. aged care, disability) to foster provision of assistive technology and equipment for individuals as a whole-of-life, and not program specific, response to their needs and as a practical support to the workforce.
- Investigate the possibility of securing funds from the Commonwealth to provide a one-off funding package, on a dollar for dollar basis, to provide essential equipment for older South Australians; and establish a three-year funding program for those older South Australians requiring specialist equipment, with \$2 million to be allocated each year of the three-year program.
- Develop an equipment leaseback policy based on individual capacity to pay, with the lease funds being set aside in a 'future fund' to cover maintenance needs and new equipment purchases.

- Review the three-year funding program to ensure that it has met the need and that further funds be injected to ensure that any unmet need is satisfied.



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**Topic name:**

Reduction of Environmental Impact

**Background/ Rationale:**

Energy usage and recycling water are becoming key environmental issues. Water and energy usage is high in residential facilities, compared to commercial buildings, as they are occupied 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year. The aged care sector recognises both the importance of these issues in a broader community context, but available funding in the first instance must be allocated to the care of residents.

The sector does not have the financial capacity to undertake the necessary modifications in existing premises or to allocate the necessary funds to new developments without some assistance.

One example of support for reducing environmental impact, is the Victorian State Government which has recently funded a pilot program to assist a 72-bed facility to install solar hot water.

**Initiatives/ Actions Required:**

- Establish a \$4m funding program (\$1m each year for four years) aimed at assisting residential aged care providers at existing and new facilities to reduce their environmental impact. The focus would be on water and energy conservation at residential facilities. ACS suggests that applications from aged care providers be required to match the State Government contribution.



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**Topic name:**

Health and Well-being

**Background/ Rationale:****(a) General Health**

Many older people are healthy (albeit sometimes frail), and the health care system only impacts on their lives for particular episodes of care. It is therefore important for health provision to move away from reactive health care for older people to focus on health promotion, restoration and rehabilitation.

Health care is the maintenance of physical, emotional and mental well-being of older people and their active engagement with life. It extends well beyond the health and community service sectors, as well-being is affected by socio-economic status, social interactions, employment and voluntary work, housing and transport.

The interface between the acute sector and aged and community service providers in the residential and community setting is very important.

**(b) Oral Health**

There is considerable evidence worldwide that confirms that good oral health assists the general well-being of an individual. Research has shown, for example, that high dental plaque levels dramatically increase an older person's risk of developing aspiration pneumonia. The ability to maintain acceptable levels of oral health and mastication among residents is highly likely to affect essential nutrition.

Older people deserve and need to be able to eat and talk comfortably, be happy with their appearance, stay pain-free and maintain self-esteem in their oral hygiene and care.

Recognising that there are often high levels of oral disease and conditions evident in people residing in aged care homes, a national consortium for *Better Oral Health in Residential Care* has been formed. The SA Dental Service, public dental providers in Victoria and NSW and the Australian Research Centre Population Oral Health (ARCPOH) have formed a lead organisation to test an oral health assessment tool kit for General Practitioners (GPs) which will be trialled at six sites.

Currently the State Government subsidises a program which supports eight private dentists visiting aged care facilities. It is understood that the value of the program is about \$500,000 annually. In the future an opportunity exists to 'dovetail' this program with the oral assessment tool kit initiative, thereby ensuring that dental visits are used for remedial activities.

The frailty of many individuals coupled with the fact that few facilities have dental rooms combine to act against remedial work being undertaken. This problem could be largely overcome if portable dental equipment were readily available. An estimated 80% of needs could be satisfied. There is also a need for an appropriate facility to be available on site. Rather than be dental specific, a medical 'share room' would suffice.

**Initiatives/ Actions Required:**

- Recognise the expertise of the aged care sector by establishing a high-level interface group comprising representatives from general practice, the community and aged care sector, which will improve communication between all involved in the health care of older people and strengthen coordination across the health, community and aged care system by reducing complexity and improving flexibility of service provision.
- Establish well-resourced multi/interdisciplinary teams (with expertise where required in mental health, chronic disease, dementia, palliative care and cultural diversity) to provide quality assessment and care to older people with increasingly complex health issues.
- Explore the possibility of providing increased resourcing to allow older people in residential care to be treated at home (i.e. within the residential facility) and not transferred to acute care when they have a sub-acute medical condition.
- Enter into negotiations with the aged care sector and the Department of Health and Ageing to develop a planned approach and funding program aimed at purchasing portable dental equipment for aged care facilities.
- Commit to increasing funding support to the existing *Better Oral Health in Residential Care* program to subsidise an additional four private dentists visiting aged care facilities.
- Extend the Community Oral Health programs state-wide by providing a further \$2.5 million.