

16th June 2010

Inquiry into Caring for Older Australians
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

SUBMISSION – CARING FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS

As we look at the future and try to predict the burdens on our economy over a ten, twenty or fifty year period we need to establish who will be needing those much needed tax dollars and the most effective way to execute a plan to minimise the total load on the population at large.

We have systematically been able to reduce the incidence of disease treating many illnesses in the past 50 years – thus creating an increase for aged services and a significantly older population. According to current trends, the next fifty years will actually see an increase in this sector bringing a greater demand for services.

We need to make decisions today that will affect the lives of our children when they become aged. Our children are well educated and well informed - have had the benefits of an affluent culture and are technically minded. They make life choices which rarely involve struggles or compromise and expect services to be provided for them albeit at a cost.

Their level of income and wealth will determine the means of appropriating such services but they will not settle for second best. The new aged have not suffered through a Great Depression or not been enlisted for Wars which has significantly altered the balance of the population.

In effect they have had the greatest opportunity to be born and have the longest life expectancy. The only detriment that they need to face is the scourge of obesity and the onset of diseases such as Type II Diabetes, Cancers and Heart Disease as a consequence of their lifestyle.

We need to predict the psychology of the new aged sector and propose a plan that will work and complement an uncertain future.

With the benefit of experience we can predict what will be needed and an action plan of how it should be executed.

Our Aged Population today hold the key for success for future programs. Addressing their needs will help us understand the needs of future generations and how we can minimise a strain on the economy.

Tender Loving Cuisine (TLC) has been a pioneer in the Aged Sector of the Community for the last 15 years. TLC is a Community based organisation offering a range of ready meals to those in the community who are no longer able to cook for themselves.

Exposure to the aged and disabled members of our community has taught us many lessons, in particular the struggles the Aged face daily in their ability to function even at the most basic levels.

Their greatest desire is to remain independent and be given the opportunity of choice, whether this is in the way of food, services or even primary care.

Many of our clients no longer have the ability to shop or cook for themselves and feel they are a burden on their families asking for constant support for the most basic requirements. Others are very much alone and depend on Carers and Government organisations to get them through the day.

The future will see a greater demand from this sector for increased services and in particular the ability to access food in the home environment – especially if they are infirmed and unable to shop or cook for themselves.

Our objective for this Submission is perhaps short term, looking at the next five to ten years, to see if intervention will promote better health of the aged and decline in the institutionalisation of this sector that can no longer look after themselves.

We propose a rebate system similar to the Child Care Rebate, allowing for a Medicare type reimbursement for those people wishing to live at home with a subsidized meal service.

Although such a rebate would be advantageous to organizations such as ourselves, we need to focus on the growing needs of the aged care sector and how we can curb the ever growing demand on the hospital system and high care Nursing facilities.

In the short term, we can address the incidence of malnutrition a primary precursor to the onset of many diseases and advent of hospital admissions.

Organisations such as ours must be subject to some sort of registration however, with a minimum requirement of HACCP certification and strict adherence to Food Labelling Laws.

We also see the system running firstly as an interim support system, where the Rebate could be offered short term based on the assessment of a Medical Practitioner/ Assessment Agency, then if there is a relapse in the health of the patient, long term assistance could be offered.

An alternative to this is a three stage objective for short-term assistance, followed by an assessment by the patient's local GP or Assessment Agency. The option to increase this assistance to six months could then be considered and in worst cases the assistance could be offered long term.

In summary this Rebate would be advantageous for the following reasons:

- **Less strain on the economy – alternative to people being placed into care.**
- **Living in their homes for longer periods – quality of life**
- **Supplement ‘single pension’ incomes – alleviating strain on cost of food.**

For this Rebate to work effectively there must be:

- **Strict regulations for food suppliers - minimum HACCP certification and strict adherence to Food Labelling Laws.**
- **Partnership of Medical Professionals/Assessment Agencies to properly qualify a client for this Rebate.**
- **On going support from GPs/Assessment Agencies to assess patients for either short, medium or long term benefits.**

This Rebate would be welcomed by the Aged and their Carers as a real contribution to their standard of living.

In conclusion, this may begin to turn around the serious inequalities that this sector is subject to.

For further information on Tender Loving Cuisine we ask you to visit our website www.tlc.org.au.

Sincerely

TENDER LOVING CUISINE

JACK BARKER

Chief Executive Officer