

29 July 2016

Data Availability and Use
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

Via online portal

Re: Data Availability and Use Issues Paper

Dear Commissioner

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Data Availability and Use Issues Paper*.

Leading Age Services Australia (LASA) is the national peak body representing all age service providers. LASA is the only industry peak body acting on behalf of private sector and not-for-profit providers delivering retirement living, home care and residential aged care services. On behalf of its members, LASA works with government, health and community services and other stakeholders to improve standards, equality and efficiency within age services.

LASAs state and national offices work together to ensure Australia's age services industry is economically viable, sustainable and able to meet the growing demand – today and in to the future.

LASA welcomes the dialogue regarding data availability and its use being undertaken by the Productivity Commission and looks forward to the final report following the inquiry.

LASA seeks a review of the existing data collection requirements that aged care providers are required to undertake by different government offices, at a Commonwealth and State and Territory level. This review would assist in highlighting whether policy changes and reforms have resulted in repetition in the data requested by multiple departments/ sections and whether the data being collected results in meaningful information. This would not only assist to inform the industry but would also act as a resource for current and future policy makers to assist them in understanding the existing data that may be available as well as provide some context to the extent of the existing reporting requirements already in place. Feedback received by LASA members suggests that there are a number of inefficiencies in the reporting requirements of providers, including significant duplication of requested data. In conjunction with identifying whether certain reporting requirements are still required, a review could also highlight whether there is concerns with data quality, in particular whether the collection guidelines leave significant room for interpretation as is known to exist in the Partnership Approach of the Data Exchange reporting for the Commonwealth Home Support Programme. This calls into questions whether the information will be able to accurately achieve the desired outcomes and if it cannot, then existing processes may need to be reviewed.

LASA is also concerned that instead of seeking to utilise existing data, government departments may introduce new reporting requirements for service providers. An example of this potentially occurring is the utilisation of the information collected through the My Aged Care portal, which is the entry point into the aged care system.

LASA has recently been involved in discussions with representatives from the Commonwealth who had suggested that instead of seeking to extract the available data through the government run *My Aged Care* system, the initial intent was to introduce additional reporting requirements for providers. LASA strongly advocated that this information is already available to the Department and therefore should be extracted from existing systems rather than seeking to introduce new reporting requirements. This example assists to illustrate that even though data may be available to government departments, it may not be fully utilised and may instead result in the introduction of additional red tape and duplication.

As highlighted in the Issues Paper, data collection and meaningful utilisation isn't without resource considerations. LASA has welcomed the introduction of quality indicators in both residential and community aged care, and recognises that informative indicators can assist in quality improvement activities, including benchmarking, education and training opportunities, and policy and procedure reviews. LASA is concerned that the quality indicators introduced into residential aged care may not be appropriate for achieving the desired outcomes of the programme. LASA has received feedback that possible reasons for the widespread decision not to participate in the voluntary collection process number is multifactorial, however one reason is due to the fact that residential aged care facilities were provided with additional resources and assistance during the trial process, and since the trial end these supports are no longer available. This example aims to highlight that new policy direction should be considered as part of a whole of system initiative, rather than isolation, therefore recognising that the introduction of additional reporting requirements has resourcing consequences. Consideration should be given to the benefits in the whole of system context.

LASA recommends that consideration should be given to the data linkages across sectors to map individual use of services between interrelated sectors, for example how people utilise the different components of the health sector (e.g. primary vs. acute care), aged care, disability services and mental health services. The ability to map the consumer journey would assist in the development and refinement of these areas to ensure that people are assisted in their ability to navigate the system but also that the system is operating efficiently and effectively in an often finite resourcing environment.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Data Availability and Use Issues Paper*. Should you have any questions regarding this submission, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Rebecca Storen, LASA Policy Officer,

Yours sincerely

Ms Kay Richards
National Policy Manager
Leading Age Services Australia