

## Creating a Powerful Context for Aged Care

As our population ages we are faced with a myriad of challenges;

- How will we meet the increasing costs of care?
- How we will manage with an ageing and depleting workforce?
- How can we meet increasing customer expectations?
- How will we respond to greater levels of public scrutiny?
- And many more.....

These questions and the responses to them dominate discussion about the future at all levels of the aged care industry and while there are dedicated organisations, interest groups, individuals and community associations each with a clear mission, commitment and strategy for meeting these challenges there is still, for me, something missing; a common national vision for aged care into the future.

My experience of aged care reform is that it is generated as a reaction. Reaction to an ageing population and the threat of the dementia epidemic; reaction to a crisis or media coverage of a crisis; reaction to the changing political agenda; reaction to the increasing costs of care and the predicted costs of care over the next 20-50 years and beyond.

The result: an aged care industry that is buffeted constantly. Overworked, underpaid, over regulated, disempowered, exposed and an aged care population that is all too often marginalised, and unheard.

Is that foundation upon which we will build the future?

What would it be like if Care Homes and Nursing Homes were the places people came to live until they died rather than the place they come to die?

What would it be like if Day Centres, Care Homes and Nursing Homes were the hub of the community, lively, bustling, and filled with visitors, laughter and life?

What would it be like if people working in the aged care industry were empowered; their knowledge, experience and commitment to good practice leading industry innovation, shaping legislation and policy rather than reacting to it?

What would it be like if care workers were seen as essential service providers, as valued and esteemed publicly as Paramedics and Fire-fighters; skilled professionals on society's front line?

Who would we know ourselves to be as a community, as a nation, if our frailest members and those that care for them existed in this world?

What would the future of aged care look like sourced from this vision?

What would aged care communities look like and how would they be funded?

What kind of people would be attracted to work in an industry shaped by the commitment to an empowered, acknowledged, skilled workforce?

What would be possible for consultation, partnership and leadership?

What would we measure, evaluate and regulate?

I believe that it is time to create a new model for aged care, one that older people want to be part of; that aged care workers are empowered to deliver and that the nation would be proud to pay for.

It starts with a line in the sand, a bold declaration; this is the service we are committed to creating, this is our stand for the future of aged care. This is our vision, generated at the highest level of Government, creating the mandate for restructure and reform.