

# **Caring for Older Australians**

## **Productivity Commission Issues Paper**

### **Hobsons Bay City Council Submission**

---

The Hobsons Bay City Council represents a municipality where approximately 23% of its residents are aged over 55 years. In the next 25 years, this proportion is forecast to increase to 40% - growing at a greater rate than Victoria as a whole.

The Council welcomes the work being undertaken by the Productivity Commission to examine avenues by which to improve the aged care system in Australia. In line with the philosophy of the Active Service Model, the Council advocates for an aged care system which places older people at its centre and which empowers people to make informed choices about their care and support needs.

This is in line with the commitment set out in the Council's Ageing Well Strategy 2007 – 2011, which aims to ensure older people can access high quality services which meet their needs.

#### **Why is the Aged Care System in Need of Reform?**

As a direct provider of services to older residents in Hobsons Bay, it is the Council's view that the following aspects of the Victorian aged care service system need to be addressed in order to achieve better outcomes for the ageing population:

- The provision of more flexible respite and support for carers
- The fragmentation and complexity of the service system's funding and regulation (due to different Federal and State responsibilities)
- A limited and ageing workforce
- Ways to create a more integrated service system which reduces duplication and simplifies processes for those in need of support
- Improvement to current service structures to create a more streamlined way of ensuring people get the level of support they need without the barriers of crossing funding streams or levels of need
- The provision of a support system to assist people to make more informed decisions about their care needs

Addressing these shortfalls in the system will go a long way to achieving what residents have told the Council they value and want, when they reach older age:

- Independence
- Support to remain in their own homes for as long as possible
- Mobility and participation in social activities
- Access to health and medical services

#### **Areas of the Service System Requiring Improvement**

**As residents live independently in their homes for longer, the models of service will need to evolve accordingly.**

- Residents living at home with high needs often are not supported to the level required. This is often due to the fact that the funding in CACPS and EACH packages does not meet clients' increasingly complex needs. Furthermore, clients are currently unable to receive both CACPS and HACC services which often leaves a client with a shortfall of support. This fragmentation of the community based programs should be removed.

**Older people entering the aged care system need to have access to appropriate information to make informed choices.**

- Improvements to the service system should aim to ensure that an older person is able to transition smoothly through the system as their needs change – a true ageing in place community model. Currently the system is quite difficult to navigate and although a lot of information is available, people need to be supported to access the information by referral agencies or via case management to make informed choices.

**Carers provide a significant amount of informal support in the community and will continue to do so as people live and remain longer in their homes**

- The service system needs to further support carers by ensuring services are flexible and there are more mechanisms by which to address carers' health and social needs. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest a lack of respite beds in residential care facilities. Although the reason for this is not fully understood, it needs to be ensured that future improvements to the service system address the need for a flexible funding model to ensure respite beds and in home respite services are available to support carers and are structured to meet carers' needs.

**In order to build an easy to navigate system which promotes continuity of care, flexibility and choice, it is important that a consistent and seamless aged care service system is in place across Australia.**

- Aged Care service providers, especially in the case of Local Government are often administering funding from both Commonwealth and State Governments. In addition to removing the fragmentation that occurs between Commonwealth and State services, there is a need to develop one regulatory framework for aged care service providers. Currently, Local Government is required to pass three quality assurance audits for CACPS, HACC and NRCP in two three-yearly intervals. To encourage true integration and person-centred care, the system, both public and private, needs to be transparent and subject to comparable quality performance measures.
- The building blocks of the system need to be uniform across Australia and promote the ease of information sharing across service providers. The use of tools such as SCTT and INI should be encouraged to reduce duplication of assessments for people trying to get support. Furthermore, IT systems do not communicate with each other (InfoExchange & EReferral) which makes integration and sharing of information across the sector very difficult and contributes to navigation problems for clients and their carers. Ease of referral should be promoted through a "No Wrong Door" policy that is an approach that provides people with, or links them to, appropriate service regardless of where they enter the system.

**The aged care system is already experiencing a lack of suitable workers for a variety of reasons.**

- The need to promote the aged care field as a discipline or profession is required in order to attract younger people to the field (particularly bi-lingual workers and males), provide recognition of their skills and expertise and improve employment conditions.
- In thinking about future improvements to the aged care service system, it needs to be recognised the role of aged care workers will become more complex due to ageing in place policies, the principles underpinning the Active Service model and enhanced supports for people to remain in their own home. This results in clients' needs becoming more complex and therefore the responsibilities of workers attending to them increasing.

## **The Vision for a Better Aged Care System**

Based on the needs of older people in Hobsons Bay, the Council supports an aged care system which provides access to the information, care and support older people need in order to retain their valued independence.

**June 2010**