

PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION SUBMISSION ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN AGED CARE AND GERIATRIC MEDICINE – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

BACKGROUND

ICT has the potential to introduce efficiency and productivity in aged care. Telehealth is the use of ICT to deliver health services. ICT applications for older people in the community, in residential aged care facilities and rural regions may allow better access to aged care services and geriatric medicine specialist. WA has a large land mass of almost half of the Australian continent but no geriatric medicine specialist outside of metropolitan Perth to provide medical support for aged communities despite attempts to recruit. Furthermore, it may be difficult for specialist to visit residential aged care facilities in metropolitan and country areas. Saligari et al (2002) demonstrated aged care and geriatric medicine services can be provided by ICT and Telehealth. The following comments about Telehealth studies in aged care may contribute to productivity in aged care.

RESIDENTIAL CARE

1. The number of places should reflect the needs of the local communities and may have to increase with the potential doubling of the aged population by 2050 described by the productivity.
2. ICT is often used in residential aged care facilities (RACF) to obtain efficiencies for delivering services but the 'people issues' need to be considered (Loh et al, 2009).

ICT IN AGED CARE

1. Research has shown it is possible to assess older people via Telehealth, for health conditions such as dementia and depression (Loh et al, 2004; Loh et al, 2007).
2. ICT may increase efficiencies and reduce the call for resource requirements due to increases in the older population by 2050.
3. The national broadband network would be an opportunity to deliver ICT style aged care services to the broader aged community be it rural, regional metropolitan or in RACFs.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (R & D) IN AGED CARE

1. Ongoing R&D in ICT for Aged Care from a services and scientific perspective is required to maintain efficiencies and leading edge technology required to cope with the increase in aged population.

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