

## Aged Care IT Vendor Association

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30<sup>th</sup> July 2010

Productivity Commission - Inquiry into Caring for Older Australians  
Caring for Older Australians  
Productivity Commission  
A: GPO Box 1428  
Canberra City ACT 2601  
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Dear Productivity Commissioner

21 leading Information Technology vendors in the Aged and Community Care industry formed ACIVA - the "Aged Care IT Vendors Association" late last year. Our clients collectively represent over 100,000 of the 180,000 aged care places currently in Australia and 10,000's of community aged care places.

We and our clients see the vital role Information Technology plays in the lives of residents and the effective management of aged care services every day.

Hence, a key aim of ours is to work with Government and the aged care Industry on key initiatives such as Health Identifiers, e-Health, ACFI, Medicare, Accreditation, Governance and Risk Management to ensure this part of the aged care sector remains viable, relevant and useful.

Our executive consists of long term respected players in the space: President – Caroline Lee (leecareplus), Vice President - Bart Williams (Questek), Secretary – Mark Audley (Wecare), Treasurer - Chris Gray (icare).

IT is an increasingly important underlying infrastructure in aged care as mentioned, and there is a growing recognition that efficiencies and risk management require the monitoring and support achieved far more effectively and productively through software systems.

At an initial forum in March 2009, vendors indicated a wish to form the Aged Care IT Vendor Association as the following issues (amongst others) were identified :

- A need to educate the industry regarding software and hardware issues to support aged care facilities in good implementation decision making
- A need for IT systems to be utilised by the industry to support quality resident health, management and business outcomes
- A need for the IT vendors to be sought after by government when considering e-health policies
- A need for direct communication between Vendors and the Government to improve understanding of the IT needs of the nation, residents and clients of aged care organisations and what the current vendors in the industry are capable of and are currently implementing
- A need to build IT capability in aged care facilities ie. basic IT skills and decision making (IT governance)

Due to some negative issues our clients were experiencing, It was identified that the vendors needed to formulate an active program of Government liaison (including Medicare) addressing :

- the immediate needs of Vendors and Providers ie. ACFI forms acceptance by DoHA in accordance with the Medicare accepted formats; action to get ACFI financial details sent to vendors early ie. advanced notification of rate schedule changes, electronic format of rate schedules to be sent;
- the future needs of the Aged Care Industry from both the vendors and the governments perspective
- the longer term impact of future industry developments required by the government to support government initiatives ie.
  - Barriers to product development – how do we fund the significant cost of incorporating Government changes into our products. Will Government contribute to the cost of implementing their changes?
  - electronic information standards (hardware different – not standardised), electronic and Legal issues
  - connectivity between intelligent devices and Vendors (interoperability) – how do we get financial and development support for these?

We have a unique vendor situation in aged care in that we have a number of outstanding products from companies that range in size from corporations to small businesses, all of whom support the industry in their documentation requirements and quality care provision mandate.

We have an expert body of knowledge that has grown since 2002 when the first full IT systems appeared in the residential aged care sector, followed by Community care support products.

We therefore request that the Productivity Commission consider the needs of the industry with regard to IT and include in their deliberations, comment regarding the need for such support to be seen as a fundamental means of attaining quality data. Without the continued viability of our vendor members, this is not possible.

The health of the nation, and the older person, cannot be adequately supported unless information can be shared across sectors; GP's, pharmacists, hospitals and aged care organisations. The Aged Care IT council have already established that medication errors for example, cost the nation millions each year, and that these costs can be significantly reduced if all health 'bodies' could access the same information.

Our software products will enable this sharing of information, and more, as we collect clinical and health related information related to all aspects of a person's life whilst living in care. It is the information held in our products that can support quality care information sharing, so that an older person requiring hospital or health support from other professionals will have a profile regarding their needs, shared amongst health professionals. We see this as achieving the following initial positive outcomes :

- reduction in medication mishaps – all health professionals will know the current status of all medications ordered/used
- reduction in the PBS through the unknowing prescription of the same or similar medications multiple times from multiple health professionals
- an ability to care for an older person in any health environment knowing their nutrition, hydration, skin, continence, emotional and physical support needs so they do not suffer care from individuals who don't 'know' them

We as a group will continue to support the sector's understanding of IT , the concept of 'Total Cost of Ownership' and return on investment but in turn, we suggest government needs to continue to support aged care organisations to establish systems that cannot be budgeted for in an environment when they must see provision of care and staffing as their core expense.

For your information, as mentioned previously, we represent all the aged care software vendors currently installed in aged care facilities – products which support the financial management of services, the care & lifestyle needs of residents/clients, and the staffing and management systems required to effectively manage an organisation.

Our members are:

Ascribe  
Autumn Care  
Campana Systems - Goldcare  
Database Consultants Australia  
Eclipse computing  
Ethan Group  
i Care  
Inerva  
isoft  
Leecareplus  
Management Advantage  
NEC Australia  
Nunatak Systems  
Peoplepoint  
Questek Australia  
Riteq  
Simavita  
Telemecare  
Thoughtware - Ionmycare  
Wecare Australia  
Webstercare

We thank you for your consideration of our submission and look forward to reading the final deliberations of the Commission.

On behalf of all our members.

Your Sincerely

Caroline Lee  
President – Aged Care IT Vendor Association

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