

INQUIRY INTO THE AGED CARE SYSTEM

Reference is made to the Productivity Commission's Draft Report titled Caring for Older Australians Recommendation 12.1.

The proposed Australian Aged Care Regulation Commission (draft recommendation 12.1), in assessing and recommending scheduled care prices should take into account the costs associated with:

- Volunteer administration and regulatory costs
- Appropriate training and support for volunteers
- Reimbursement of out of pocket expenses for those volunteers who are at risk of not participating because of these expenses.

Upon review of the draft report, TRI Community Exchange welcomes the Commission's recognition of the valuable part played by volunteers.

In regard to the future of volunteer programs within aged care and specifically in relation to Recommendation 12.1 we recommend the following additional considerations be made by the Productivity Commission:

1. Ensure there is ongoing localized support for volunteer programs within HACC services providing social support, transportation to appointments and outings, delivering meals and participation on management committees.
2. The Federal Government considers introducing strategies for acknowledging the contribution of volunteers and also as an incentive for increasing the uptake of volunteering in the HACC sector such as the introduction of tax incentives.
3. There is a national, culturally appropriate media campaign promoting volunteering for HACC services targeting baby boomers, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities and Indigenous Australians.
4. The distribution of funding to HACC services using volunteers is adequate and equitable across services to recruit, train, manage and retain volunteers and out-of-pocket expenses should be available to all volunteers not just those at risk of participating.
5. Ensure services have adequate staffing to manage volunteers. In a Report HACC volunteer services in Nepean and Cumberland/Prospect Project report December 2006 produced by WSCF stated the ratio of full time staff to volunteers in Cumberland/Prospect and Nepean HACC funded services for Meals Services was 1:63. We would not allow this situation for paid staff therefore adequate funds should be made available to reduce the volunteering support ratio.

Volunteers are a valuable resource for the government and the community. They save the government dollars by providing priority services at a nominal cost compared to paid staff doing the same job. They improve the quality of life for the frail aged and people with disabilities whilst also saving government funds by allowing them to remain in their own homes as long as possible. Volunteers make a valuable contribution to the social inclusion of our communities.