

Parkinson's Australia

Mr M. Woods
Deputy Chairman
Inquiry into Caring for Older Australians
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Mr Woods,

Re: Inquiry into Caring for Older Australians

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Productivity Commission's draft report.

Parkinson's Australia welcomes the entitlement approach outlined in the report. We support the focus on the need to promote independence, to enable a person to choose care at home or in a residential facility and to have choice in providers. For people with Parkinson's, the need for continuity of care as a person's needs change with the course of an illness is of paramount importance. Thus we support a system that is easy to navigate and person centred which recognises changing needs.

Having an adequately trained workforce to deliver the policy is essential. It is therefore disappointing that there is no mention in the draft report of the need for skill development for particular conditions. As our submission highlighted:

Though the Productivity Commission's Inquiry recognises the special needs of older Australians with diverse cultural backgrounds, the special needs accompanying the disease trajectory of Parkinson's is not recognised in policy documents, in the ACAT assessment which is a key to accessing all types of care within the existing system, nor in aged care services. This has the consequence that general aged care services are normally provided to people with Parkinson's disease. This combined with the lack of awareness of the disease in the health and general community results in the lack of an easily assessable and targeted pathway to aged care services for people with Parkinson's, their families and carers. Continuity of care for a progressive disease such as Parkinson's is compromised as the rehabilitation model is not consistent with a degenerative and increasingly complex disease where self-management is only relevant for the first three stages of Parkinson's disease.

It is recommended that the federal government fund the development of a specific training package for community health workers and staff in residential aged care, on the care and management of people with Parkinson's. For residential workers the aim would be to develop a Parkinson's competency to form part of the Certificate III in Aged Care and a DVD for residential care staff focussing on medication management and falls reduction specifically for people with Parkinson's.

The draft report recommends 'improving the interface between aged care and health' facilitated by multidisciplinary teams. The multidisciplinary teams need to have expertise in particular

conditions such as Parkinson's, not just in aged care as the report indicates. For instance, it has been estimated that people with Parkinson's make up between 5% and 8% of the population in aged residential care. There is a lack of awareness in the health and general community of the challenges and needs of those suffering from this complex and disabling condition, as well as community stigma and constraints in the delivery of health and social support services.¹ Services need to be modified to meet the particular needs of special needs groups.

Parkinson's Australia supports the response of Alzheimer's Australia to the Commission's Report particularly its recommendations relating to the care of people with dementia. It is estimated that 31% of people with Parkinson's will also develop dementia.² Ensuring that issues relating to those with the combined disability of Parkinson's disease and dementia are addressed through adequate funding models is of paramount importance.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Draft Report.

Yours sincerely,

Daryl Smeaton

Chief Executive Officer

Parkinson's Australia

18 March 2011

¹ Access Economics Pty. Ltd, *Living with Parkinson's Disease, 2007, p.i*

² Aarsland, D., Zaccai, J., & Brayne, C. (2005) A Systematic Review of Prevalence Studies of Dementia in Parkinson's Disease. *Movement Disorders*, 20(10), 1255-1263