

## **CARING FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS**

### **Productivity Commission Draft Report January 2011**

#### **Betty Johnson AO for the Older Women's Network NSW**

We thank you for this Report. Although there are some areas we are concerned about in terms of care of older people and the financial changes to pay for our care, we believe and hope that there are very many challenges which could be met by the Report when implemented.

We add that the expectation and hope of those who receive care either in residential aged care facilities and/or at home has always been high. We hope that these expectations will be met by the implementation of the Report and any improvements to it which will follow these consultations.

We wish to emphasize that respect and dignity are two values that should hold in the industry of aged care; between staff and residents/clients, between staff and residents/clients and their relatives/carers; between residents and other residents and between staff and other staff members.

We are pleased that community aged care is included in the report and that the support for independence, social participation and social inclusion have not been left out.

It is also appreciated that there is recognition of the needs of improvements for staff salaries, work load and training

It is appreciated that the Government states that it: "aims to ensure that all frail older Australians have timely access to appropriate care and support services as they age...through a safe and secure aged care system. (DoHA 2009, p.xi. Report xxv.)

#### **Comments on some of the Draft recommendations::**

**Funding:** will be dealt with by our submission to the Consultation on 28 March 2011 and **Staffing** by our presentation with others from the Quality Aged Care Action Committee.; Other comments: not sure about the removal of the distinction between high and low care. Can it be guaranteed that 'high care' residents will not be disadvantaged and that 'low care' people will be able to maintain their independence?

**Recommendation 1.5 and 1.7:** More information is needed on the availability of the 'basic standard of residential aged care accommodation for those with limited financial means...'

**Recommendation 1.7:** Remove the distinction between ordinary and extra service bed licences. Does this mean that there will be no 'extra services'? If not, what does it mean?

**Recommendation 1.11:** Agree with the final sentence 'The Commission should monitor and report on the cost of care, basic accommodation and the stop-loss limit.'

**Recommendation 8.1:** Agree that the establishment of an Australian Seniors Gateway Agency to provide information, assessment, care coordination and care referral services. Information as described ; 'on healthy ageing, social inclusion and participation, age-friendly accommodation, and also information on the availability, quality and costs of care services from approved providers, and how to access those services' would be very welcome by older people.

The establishment of the Gateway as a separate agency under the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 would also be welcome.

**Recommendation 8.2:** The replacement of the 'current system of discrete care packages with a single integrated, and flexible, system of care provision' would be better than the current system of packages provided under Home and Community Care and the Commonwealth funded care packages which are very confusing to older people and carers.

**Catering for Diversity:** Recommendations 9.....Agree that all older people have access to information and assessment services, interpreter services and diagnostic tools that are culturally appropriate for the assessment of care needs and that staff should 'undertake professional development activities which increase their cultural awareness'.

It is pleasing that the Australian Government should 'ensure that remote and Indigenous aged care services be actively supported before remedial intervention is required'.

**Age-friendly housing and retirement villages: Recommendations 10...** are supported . We believe that older people, especially older women, should be consulted about the issues in the Recommendations, e.g. meeting access needs, home maintenance and modification services, future housing needs of older people,

We agree that 'the regulation of retirement villages and other retirement specific living options should remain the responsibility of state and territory governments and should not be aligned with the regulation of aged care'.. Nationally consistent legislation would be an advantage.

**Delivering care to the aged – workforce issues: Recommendation 11...** The proposals to support carers are supported with the intention that this is what carers want and need.

## **Regulation – the future direction**

## **Recommendations 12....**

The establishment of a new regulatory agency, the **Australian Aged Care Regulation Commission (AACRC)** under the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 is an improvement.

It is very important that the Department of Health and Ageing would cease its regulatory activities (except for policy development – including quality standards – and advice). It is very important that **'quality standards'** remain with the Department.

The assessment by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency could be improved by better training of assessors and more notice taken of care practices etc.

**Complaints handling and reviews would be more independent** and trusted by the public. The structure of complaints into three areas of assessment, early resolution and conciliation; investigations and referral; and communication, stakeholder management and outreach and other recommendations of the Walton Review would help to ensure that the complaints mechanism is more accessible to residents and families.

The improvement in quality of services by using complaints to recognise what is not working in the aged care system would be invaluable.

Older people and their families need to be protected in making complaints and should be reassured that they will not suffer retribution. We know of families who wait until the passing of their loved one to make a complaint.

The functions of the AACRC in responsibility for **compliance checking and enforcement of regulations** covering the quality of community and residential aged care and other issues referred to on page LIV would be a great advantage.

Reforms to aged care services delivered under **Home and Community Care** should make sure that the needs and ideas of clients of those services are respected and acted upon. (IMPACT 2008 attached.)

**Assault on residents** should continue to be mandatorily reported to police. Mandatory reporting is not established in the actions of professionals in health care. The police attending should show more interest in what has happened to

residents rather than visit and then ignore the situation. This attitude of police has been reported to us.

We agree that any duplicate and inconsistent regulations in relation to **infectious disease outbreaks**, food safety, occupational health and safety should be removed

We would recommend the addition of regulatory **hand hygiene** as directed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care and that staff should be trained to **recognise any resident or client who is deteriorating** immediately to the proper professional. (NSW Department of Health practice.)

**Research:** Older women would be better pleased if research carried out on ageing was also gender related. The difference in body, functions, life style etc. should be including in research on older people. Otherwise it is not appropriate to some of us , usually older women.

We are pleased with the recognition of the engagement of consumers in various activities and in decision making processes. We would welcome any selection of consumers should take notice of possible past or present conflicts of interest.

Thank you again for the Report and for the opportunity to comment.

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