

Greek Welfare Centre NSW  
Newtown NSW 2042

## Comments on the Draft Recommendations in ‘ Caring for Older Australians Productivity Commission Draft Report’ (Jan 2011)

The Greek Welfare Centre is the welfare and community services arm of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in Australia. As noted in our submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Aged Care, the Centre provides a range of services and programs that meet the needs of older Australians and their carers/families. While the main target group is the Greek speaking community the Centre also provides services to other Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities, and the community at large.

Over the past 35 years, in addition to direct service delivery, the Centre has established credentials in working in partnership with government and non government service providers to:

- represent the needs of people from non English speaking backgrounds
- to improve access to services, and
- to promote multicultural policies.

It is in this capacity that we present our comments on the draft recommendations of the report.

Overall, the Centre supports the Inquiry into Aged Care draft report, and the broad aim of ***A framework for assessing aged care*** (draft recommendation 4.1). This includes the concepts of person-centred services, and treating older people with dignity and respect. These underpin current practice in many ethnic specific and multicultural services.

### ***Paying for Aged Care***

We support the principles of co-contribution, removal of regulatory restrictions on the number of community care packages and residential bed licenses. We also support the concept of a safety net, a cap on accommodation charges, and the draft recommendation 1.5 to ensure support for those people with limited financial means.

It is important to provide options for payment that are realistic and do not lead to further economic disadvantage of elderly people who are on a pension, and those who may own their home. There are elderly people who may be ‘asset rich, income poor’ who might participate in the Pensioners Bond scheme.

There should be further clarification and consultation on what type of ‘living expenses and aged care costs’ would be applicable (draft recommendation 1.6).

### ***Options for broadening the funding base***

Draft recommendation 7.1 needs further clarification. There should be more consultation about this option in reference to other payment options as noted above.

### ***Care and Support***

Draft recommendations 8.1 and 8.2. The Australian Seniors Gateway Agency delivering services via a regional structure is supported. Services for carers/family members are an integral component of aged care. However, the stated level and scope of service delivery under the Agency is complex and multifaceted. This requires further development, particularly in regards to how people from a non English speaking background will be ensured equitable service delivery. The provision of interpreter services and cultural awareness training is not adequate (see also Catering for Diversity comments).

We recommend that there is a provision in the policy and funding requirements for these agencies to work in partnership with culturally and linguistically appropriate services (through the maintenance of current bilingual service capacity, service brokerage, linking to local community networks, bilingual support, funding of community education projects eg promotion of healthy ageing, early intervention, prevention and awareness, social support and recreational projects).

The suggestion to 'fund an expanded system of aged care consumer advocacy services' is supported as strategy to ensure input into service delivery and decision making at this level.

### ***Catering for Diversity – caring for special needs groups***

Draft recommendations 9.1 and 9.2 refer to strategies for catering for cultural diversity. These do not adequately reflect the level and extent of catering for diversity in the provision of aged care.

Firstly, cultural diversity as a concept and terminology as noted in the draft report is not consistent with the current practice of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse service provision (CALD), or the previous terminology 'non English speaking background'. The addition of Gays, Lesbians, bisexual, transgender and intersex people (GLBTI) in the definition of cultural diversity misrepresents both the CALD and GLBTI communities.

We recommend that the two groups are identified independently as special needs groups.

We recommend that the definition of CALD groups is consistent with the current Federal and State government definitions espoused in the Charter of public service in a culturally diverse society. 'The Charter aims to ensure that government services meet the needs of people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds' (who have a connection to non English speaking countries through the immigration or refugee programs and have a history of settlement in Australia).

The Charter further provides the principles under which service provision is considered equitable. We recommend these principles are incorporated into the draft report: That is:

'To do this services have to be culturally appropriate, accessible, consumer-oriented and effective. The Charter advocates making these cultural diversity considerations integral to strategic planning, policy development, budgeting and the reporting process of government service delivery'. (Department of Immigration and Citizenship).

### ***Age-friendly housing and retirement villages***

We support the draft recommendations 10.1-10.5, including the role of COAG in developing a strategic policy framework, and role of state and territory governments in regulating retirement villages and other retirement living options.

### ***Delivering care to the aged- workforce issues***

The provision of support for carers is integral to maintaining services to the elderly. The range of support services listed in the draft recommendation 11.1 should also include strategies to support carers from a non English speaking background.

We support draft recommendation 11.2 for aged care staff, including community care workers. Skills development for the aged care workforce, and training and support for volunteers is a significant factor in ensuring quality service delivery in aged care.

Training on issues affecting the elderly and carers from diverse cultural and language backgrounds, dementia and other special needs are essential components the relevant modules.

### ***Regulation – the future direction***

We support the principles noted in the draft recommendations, including the establishment of a new regulatory body to oversee compliance, complaints and accreditation issues.

### ***Aged care policy research and evaluation***

*We strongly support this draft recommendation. There is a need for further research among all of the special needs groups who can work in partnership with the relevant policy research units.*

### ***Reform implementation***

The timetable to implement the reform should be realistic and include opportunities for extensive consultation and input from the elderly from a non English speaking background and other special needs groups. A five year time frame as suggested is realistic given the demands of the reform agenda. The reform implementation should include appropriate financial/budgetary commitments

The reform timetable will also be facilitated by the proposal to exempt current users of care services and relevant financial arrangements of some of the providers in the process of implementation.

### ***In Summary***

The Centre supports the overall principles as stated in the draft report with our comments/recommendations noted above.

The draft report should include a definition for people from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds (non English speaking) that is consistent with current Federal and State government policies and principles (see also above 9.1).

Any future planning and implementation of the recommendations arising from the Inquiry into Aged Care should also be underpinned by the principles of the Charter of public service in a culturally diverse society.

### **Contact**

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