

## Overview

The Productivity Commission (PC) released its draft Report *Caring for Older Australians* in January 2011. The report appears to capture, explore and express the content, complexities and concerns of the myriad perspectives and discussions on the aged care sector; its policy and program parameters and the provision and delivery of aged and community care services to older people.

The Report also reflects a hopeful mood and generous spirit of deliberations about the needs in the aged care sector. It emphasises that it is timely to improve the provision of aged care services for the well being of older Australians and there is a mood and an expectation that reforms are possible.

It was encouraging to note that non-English speaking background/cultural and linguistically diverse aged and community care issues are generally canvassed as integrated elements for the aged and community care sector not as exotica or an afterthought.

## Recurring Themes

The report builds on a number of previous reports and specific themes are reviewed, reiterated and highlighted, for example:

- inconsistencies in costs and assessment processes;
- increasing diversity of needs;
- variable quality of services and care provided;
- workforce training inefficiencies and shortages;
- constraints of compounded regulations and
- changing access to community and residential care.

These recurring themes are articulated and emphasise that the PC Inquiry Report is evidence based and that the report is the result of accumulated knowledge, perspectives, views and objectives; therefore, substantiated and underpinned by previous reports. In 2010 these themes were canvassed, re-evaluated, re-stated and reinforced by the recent Inquiry. The recommendations, therefore, are considered and valued because they recognise and respect what has gone before and build onto rather than simply pull apart the system.

## Coordinated approach to reform

The PC Inquiry Report is a comprehensive; coordinated and targeted approach to the aged care framework, system and sector. The suggested recommendations aim to better capture an integrated sector, rather than sections, as did some of the previous reports. This is the Report many in the aged care sector were anticipating. The Inquiry Report is comprehensive and coordinated and targets the aged care framework, system and sector. It is a timely stock take of the current situation and suggests recommendations and reforms which can improve the provision and delivery of aged care services so that older people can better access services of their choice.

The report is comprehensive and detailed yet the summaries are concise and coordinated and the recommendations and reforms practical and possible. Navigating aged care can be a nightmare and this report puts much into perspective: access; information; consumer-centred care; carers; workforce; costs; affordability and recommends practical, targeted reforms.

## Gaps

The gaps include lack of clarity and integration with the disability sector and the recently released Productivity Commission Report; lack of clarity on the implementation process for the HACC program transition: will the coordination and delivery of aged care programs be compromised? There continues to be a lack of clarity and overlap with some aspects of Disability; Health; HACC, and Carers. Significantly, the report puts the spotlight on financial matters and the impact on service providers and consumers yet costings for most suggested reforms are in principle and ball park figures rather than specific and formulaic. Costings can provide a rationale for escape clauses

for governments and others. And costings can be an unsurmountable challenge for service providers and consumers. Costings will be the devil in the detail.

For Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) older people the clarification and simplification or streamlining of the pathways, intersections and costings of access to information and services on health; disability; caring and aged and community care are essential. The current systems are bureaucratic, over-regulated, multilayered and compound the challenges for CaLD older people in accessing information and services. The special and specific aged and community care needs of CaLD older people and their families require a program response which is integrated with other sectors, inclusive, targeted and funded.

### **Queries**

For older people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds the report canvasses several priority issues but does not address these issues as specific reforms, for example,

### **How will...**

- Reporting and information about the aged and community care reforms be provided to older people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds?
- Older CaLD persons provide feedback and responses?
- Older people from CaLD backgrounds access the Gateway? Will the objectives and outcomes to be achieved by the Gateway identify and aim to address the special and specific information, linguistic and cultural needs of older people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds? Will there be outsourced CaLD specific providers? Will the Gateway be able to refer Dutch older people to Dutch speaking service providers or Latvian speaking to Latvian speaking service providers? Will the Gateway be required to be reflective of and responsive to the information needs of CaLD older people? Will assessment processes factor in CaLD perspectives such as cultural perceptions of time? Will bilingual workers be able to assist in the communication process? How will family members and informal carers participate in the Gateway approach? How will interpreters be used and will the Gateway will be user friendly for **significant** numbers of CaLD older people?
- Recommended interpreting services be funded, targeted and made responsive to needs? How will interpreters be used? Are the interpreting services for the professionals and service providers so they can deliver better targeted services? Or are the interpreting services for CaLD older people? How will the interpreters be funded?
- Culturally targeted and responsive service provision be integrated into all better practice models of programs and projects?
- CaLD community capacity building (informed on aged and community care service delivery; cultural values; palliative care) be undertaken so that older people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds can receive cultural appropriate care from their own community should they so choose?
- Service providers receive information and training on culturally competent service delivery? Who will fund the training? Who will provide the training?
- Post war, hard earned, family heritage assets be able to be passed on to family?

### **Focussing on priorities for CaLD older people**

CaLD older people need to access and receive responsive and targeted culturally appropriate care information and services and service providers (both generalist or ethno specific) require assistance, through education and training, to deliver culturally appropriate care. Both areas are raised as issues to be addressed in the draft Report but particular reforms are not canvassed or detailed with any specifics.

### **Access to informed choices about aged and community care services**

CaLD older people want:

- access to informed choices about aged and community care services;
- current, reliable culturally and linguistically reflective information;
- simplified, streamlined pathways;
- consumer directed, culturally targeted and responsive care;

- continuity of care;
- family, carers and volunteers supported and
- being able to contribute to costs as their means permit.

### **Managing capacity and competition and financial challenges**

Meanwhile service providers (both generalist or ethno specific) while managing capacity and competition and financial challenges; require a more flexible approach to providing services and accommodation needs and are supported with education and training of the workforce; carers and volunteers.

### **Sector response**

The sector needs to respond to the report in a sector based, constructive and coordinated way. The response from the sector should be with a wide angled lens, not with a rear view mirror, self serving; entrepreneurial or silo based. The report succeeds in bringing together various threads of aged care; it is a snapshot which identifies the aims and objectives and proposes a shared view of those aims, objectives and challenges.

The report is an opportunity to progress that shared view into a shared vision for the future of the aged and community care sector. Sector focussed, CaLD perspectives integrated, opportunities include to:

- be consumer directed;
- improve and simplify pathways to information and access to services;
- improve education and training,
- develop a dynamic workforce and to be inclusive of various elements.

Maximising these opportunities by integrating CaLD perspectives will improve information and services delivery to older CaLD persons.

The opportunity is to go beyond reviewing and reflecting but now to respect and respond by continuing to advocate on the main aims and objectives; reinforce the shared views and build on them by confirming details and costings which embrace the spirit yet are practical, inclusive and responsive in their implementation. An implementation model for aged and community care reform requires an acceptance of the principles and premises in the PC Report and the development of a planned, costed, and integrated program.

### **Productivity Commission Inquiry Draft recommendations: a CaLD perspective**

#### **Overview**

Considering aged and community care CaLD perspectives includes:

- Canvassing, understanding and meeting needs in a culturally appropriate manner
- Promoting access to information and services which are culturally appropriate
- Supporting and training people to develop cultural knowledge, skills and competencies
- Anticipating and predicting resources required

The aged and community care sector can implement and deliver better practice, CaLD responsive and targeted programs and projects by:

- Acquiring cultural experiences, knowledge and understandings about its consumers and stakeholders;
- Applying acquired cultural content factors to knowledge, skills and competencies;
- Adjusting programs, policies and practices: being mindful of cultural content and checking assumptions;
- Anticipating knowledge, skills and competencies required to be effective in intercultural settings;

Better practice models promote approaches which are reflective of and responsive to CaLD perspectives by:

- collecting and maintaining CaLD specific demographic profiles and narratives which inform aged and community care planning, policies, procedures, programs and practices;
- facilitating intercultural communication processes and strategies to foster effective, clear and reliable engagement;

- supporting consumers and their families; stakeholders; bilingual professionals and interpreters receiving targeted information, education and training.

These three approaches are used to review the specific recommendations of the Productivity Commission Inquiry draft report aiming to provide a CaLD perspectives inclusive, integrated view.