



21 March 2011

Commissioner Mike Woods  
Inquiry into Caring for Older Australians  
Productivity Commission  
GPO Box 1428  
Canberra City ACT 2601

By email: [agedcare@pc.gov.au](mailto:agedcare@pc.gov.au)

Dear Commissioner,

### **Caring for Older Australians**

Thank you for the opportunity to lodge this submission to the draft report, *Caring for Older Australians*.

### **About Abbeyfield Australia**

Abbeyfield Australia is the peak body representing 29 Abbeyfield Associations and Branches in Tasmania, Victoria, NSW, the ACT, Queensland and South Australia. Our forte is community based housing and aged care. We do it well and provide comfortable, secure and attractive accommodation by leveraging strong local volunteer management on the strength of the national Abbeyfield framework.

We understand that the demand is great for affordable community housing for older people wishing to live independently, and appropriate aged care models incorporating sensitive incremental 'ageing in place'. The Abbeyfield model is flexible, and our original 'older persons' group house model has already been successfully adapted to include culture specific group housing, group housing for adults with mild intellectual disabilities, independent living units, and fully accredited aged care facilities.

### **Responsive service systems**

Abbeyfield Australia echoes much of the July 2010 submission lodged by Aged Community Care Victoria (ACCV). In particular we support a responsive service system delivered by a network of aged and community care services, each integrated with the broader health, housing and human service system. As the ACCV proposes, we see that this can be achieved by:

- ensuring older Australians receive care in the most appropriate setting by expanding access to short-term and sub-acute care, such as transition care, palliative care, rehabilitation and step-down care in aged care homes.
- providing a range of affordable housing choices so that older people "age in place" in their local communities with good access to support and amenities.

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- a seamless system of community care supported by much finer increments of care funding matched to people's needs.
- abolishing the outdated low and high care divide within aged residential care to provide greater choice about ageing in place.
- implementing models of Consumer Directed Care in partnership with the aged care industry and consumer groups.
- a commitment to realistic funding of the additional costs of support and care driven by the special needs of people from CALD backgrounds, and at risk community sectors.

### **Adjusting Consumer Directed Care (CDC) for rural and remote communities**

Whilst Abbeyfield Australia supports the move towards CDC, we are also aware that the free market can be a crude mechanism for allocating investment in soft services such as aged care and affordable housing.

The free market generally dictates that investment funds go where the highest financial returns are achieved, which in many instances will discourage investment in aged care or suitable affordable housing in smaller rural or remote communities. As a consequence, we believe that a move to CDC ought to incorporate a mechanism to adjust CDC funding on a geographic basis to recognize the true cost of providing services in rural or remote communities vis-a vie a similar service in urban or metropolitan communities.

### **National regulation system**

In the medium term, Abbeyfield Australia would prefer a single national system for the regulation of a single comprehensive national system of aged care and community housing. We see this as a way to reduce administrative costs and 'red tape' incurred by aged care providers operating across state or territory jurisdictions. As the sector becomes more heavily integrated, the propensity for providers to operate across jurisdictions will become increasingly prevalent.

### **Volunteers**

Abbeyfield Australia fully supports the draft recommendation (11.5) pertaining to recognizing the cost of volunteer administration, training and support.

However we also feel the recommendation should go further, and seek to establish an ongoing national strategy to increase the number and diversity of volunteers within the community. Such a strategy would:

- increase the pool of volunteers
- raise the profile and community estimation of volunteering
- encourage professional bodies and employers to actively encourage professionals to volunteer
- seek to instill a life-long sense of volunteering in younger people by introducing a national volunteering campaign for school children.

Yours sincerely,

**Chris Reside**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Abbeyfield Australia