

Positive aged care experiences are everywhere, but often not visible



Pat Sparrow, CEO of ACSA

MAKING THE positive experiences of aged care more widely known and discussed in national conversation is a constant challenge for the sector.

In a first for the industry, a broad-ranging set of data about individual's personal experience of aged care were released showing a majority of residents have positive experiences of aged care.

The empirical data contained in the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency's

Consumer Experience Reports is drawn from over 15,000 interviews across residents living in 1,100 aged care facilities. It provides a rare and valuable insight into the performance of individual service providers.

The responses show overwhelmingly that very few residents are unhappy most or all of the time, with well over 90 per cent happy across 10 domains most or all of the time. And 97.78 per cent of those interviewed say that staff treat them with respect most of the time or always. The same sentiment was reflected when it came to questions of safety with 98.31 per cent say that they feel safe most of the time or always.

This information is valuable and instructive for all in the industry to know what providers are getting right, as well as areas where things could be improved.

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and accountability are the antidotes to this concern.

This is even more so the case as the industry prepares for the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and all the scrutiny, challenges and constructive discussions this process entails. The 2019-20 Federal Budget and election also bring a sharper focus to what is being done for older Australians.

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We will continue to push for a national discussion on aged care that is balanced and represents all experiences, both good and bad.

The need to reinstate some balance in the public discussion of aged care has been a longstanding wish for many in the industry.

We launched the national storytelling platform Humans of Aged Care to achieve this and highlight the many thousands of people involved with the sector who have a positive effect on the lives they touch.

These are individuals who go above and beyond in their care efforts. We hope that by sharing their stories told in their words will help put some balance back into the public discussion of our industry. ■

Facing towards the future

AS WE START 2019 it is a useful time to reflect a little, but more importantly to face towards the future.

The Australian Association of Gerontology held a very successful 51st annual conference in Melbourne during November 2018. With the theme 'Advancing Not Retiring: Active Players, A Fair Future' it is no surprise that there were

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some inspiring sessions on innovations and a fair future.

There is no doubt though that Professor Sir Michael Marmot provided some highlights of the conference with his contribution around the importance of the social determinants of health.

The environment we live in can have such a major impact on our health, behaviours and disease patterns over our lifetime.

While these impacts are cumulative this doesn't mean we can't make a difference right now by focusing on reablement.

Reablement can mean many things but ultimately it is about regaining some capacity.

It is not too late for older people to 'reable' and to improve their health and fitness to regain some elements of independence that are lost.



Professor Christine Stirling, president of the AAG

Aged care provider Southern Cross Care SA/NT has been undertaking research demonstrating the benefits of fitness programs and gyms for residents that point to future directions for empowering older people to improve their physical, mental and social wellbeing.

Aged care facilities can improve the environment too to help independence.

The improvement in mental health and quality of life that occurs when opportunities for social engagement and fun are part of a facility's ethos are demonstrable.

Equally, adopting technologies that improve privacy and choice are elements of respect and reablement that should not be overlooked.

As we start 2019 we will no doubt hear more about reablement and different strategies that can help to improve the quality of life of our older Australians. ■

