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Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce
Attention: Professor Pollaers
ACWSTaskforce@health.gov.au

14 December 2017

Dear Professor Pollaers,

Re: Summit follow-up

Thank you for inviting AAG to participate in the Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce Summit on 4 December 2017.

I am writing to follow-up the discussion you had at the Summit with one of AAG's Senior Policy and Research Officers (Dr Sandra South) regarding the need for an evidence-based approach to aged care policy and reforms.

AAG exists to improve the experience of ageing through **connecting** research, policy and practice. Its principles are to be evidence informed, multi-disciplinary and holistic, independent, collaborative and fair. AAG has over 1,100 members across every State and Territory in Australia representing the full breadth of aged care experts across sectors including research, education, aged care, health and allied health.

AAG urges the Taskforce to adopt a systematic and transparent approach to exploring and collating evidence related to aged care and workforce implications. A truly evidence-based approach considers: 1. evidence from rigorous research studies, and; 2. the experiences and opinions of consumers, practitioners and any other key stakeholders. We believe that the latter is met through the various consultations planned by the Taskforce and previous reviews and inquiries in the aged care sector. However, we are concerned that research evidence does not always play a central role in decisions relating to aged care and the aged care workforce, and will not do so in the future unless action is taken.

"[...] evidence and analysis that is robust and publicly available can serve as an important counterweight to the influence of sectional interests, enabling the wider community to be better informed about what is at stake in interest groups' proposals, and enfranchising those who would bear the costs of implementing them." Gary Banks AO, 2009 (1)

We urge the Taskforce to develop and make publicly available not only a plan for objectively and transparently assessing the current research evidence when forming any of its own recommendations, but also to recommend how it can be ensured that research evidence will play a central role in any future aged care policies and reforms.

AAG notes that there is no single national, independent organisation with ongoing funding that can collate, translate and identify gaps in evidence related to ageing with the aim of informing Australian policy.

Any organisation that was entrusted to collate and translate evidence must be independent and clearly delineated from the interests of any other organisations. Otherwise, there is the risk that evidence will be identified that supports policy recommendations, rather than evidence-informed policy decisions being made.

AAG acknowledges and supports the work the Government has done to promote the collection and availability of data on aged care through its own mechanisms, such as the work of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare which includes their [Gen Aged Care Data website](#). This complements the excellent studies being conducted by researchers throughout Australia, including by [AAG's Collaborating Research Centres](#). In addition, initiatives such as [palliAGED](#) which summarise evidence in specific fields for practitioners and the community are excellent and [the proposed Knowledge Hub on Elder Abuse](#) shows promise. The individual researchers, research organisations and other organisations that currently develop, for example, systematic reviews of evidence or policy implications papers should continue to do so. However, there is a need to create a single organisation that collates and links to the work of these other organisations, and which has the capacity to identify and address gaps in evidence summaries from a policy perspective.

The work of other countries could provide inspiration and a further source of evidence summaries, including the United Kingdom's [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\)](#) and the [Social Care Institute for Excellence \(SCIE\)](#), Sweden's [Committee for Knowledge-Based Guidance directed by the National Board of Health and Welfare](#), and the work of the [World Health Organisation](#).

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss and develop these ideas further together with the Taskforce, including through contribution to the development of any plans.

AAG look forward to contributing to the upcoming stakeholder consultation opportunities.

Kind regards,



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Chief Executive Officer

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1. Banks G. Challenges of evidence-based policy making [Internet]. Australian Public Service Commissioner, Australian Government; 2009 Jun [cited 2017 Dec 12]. Available from: <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/archive/publications-archive/evidence-based-policy>