

## Carers and families key to changing Australia's perception of ageing and aged care

WE ARE GETTING active and talking to media, community and to politicians of all persuasions and advocating for a sustainable aged care sector and an Australia that is prepared for ageing.

We are reaching out directly to the people who matter most – carers and older Australians.

Why are we doing this and why is it important?

Despite how we are sometimes portrayed, providers and our workforce exist to put the wellbeing and happiness of older Australians first. We care.

In order to achieve that, both presently and into the future, we will need broad community support, community involvement in planning and sustainable funding.

That's why we are asking everyone to get involved



Pat Sparrow, CEO of ACSA

in planning for our ageing population, and their own ageing earlier.

Providers need to get active because they can easily speak directly to the people that matter – older people and their families.

These are not only the people who are most interested in aged care issues.

They are also the group with power to change the national conversation and shift thinking about ageing.

In advocating for change there are three important elements that need to be present.

Firstly, we must acknowledge failures when they occur.

Accepting responsibility is the right thing to do, but it also allows us to identify and address issues and to highlight how individual problems are often signposts of the broader challenges we face – including inadequate funding.

Secondly, we need to tell positive stories about the solutions and reforms that can set us up for the future. We aren't here to complain, we are here to be part of the solution.

Finally, and most importantly, we need to

speak directly to families, local media and politicians. As the most credible spokesperson, local providers can speak to the adversities, opportunities, and necessities to deliver for the community.

Examples of extraordinary aged care are seen everywhere, every day. Unfortunately, there are also some hard conversations being avoided.

The big improvements providers are working towards won't be fully realised unless we see a commensurate response from government and the community.

There is good reason to feel optimistic about what can be achieved through the royal commission, but we know that unless there is a clear direction and sustainable funding, we won't always be able to meet our own or the community's expectations of high quality care. ■

## Reablement requires a partnership approach

REABLEMENT IS a promising concept increasingly spoken about but one that needs more clarity. Essentially reablement is a short-term program aimed at assisting older people to maximise their independence.

It involves time-limited interventions targeted towards a person's specific goal or desired outcome to "adapt to some functional loss or regain confidence and capacity to resume activities," according to the Department of Health's aged care assessment manual for Regional Assessment Services and Aged Care Assessment Teams.

This requires a stronger partnership approach to provide care with the older person – not for them – and often involves allied health professional expertise.

The AAG Reablement Project 2017-2019 has provided six useful fact sheets that cover definitions, evidence, and the approaches used in Australian

communities and residential aged care facilities. They also cover case studies and international approaches to reablement.

Some of the key elements of reablement follow below.

There is Australian evidence that reablement programs for those remaining at home can reduce the need for services and hence save costs.

Western Australia has provided strong leadership in this space and part of their assessment for home services involves the older person demonstrating the activities they are capable of.

This means the health professional can suggest new ways of performing activities, assistive technologies that may improve capacity, and identify any physical reablement or coaching that would improve capacity to undertake activities of daily living (see AAG fact sheet 2).

Victoria has also provided strong leadership with the



Professor Christine Stirling, president of the AAG

Victorian Active Service Model based on wellness and reablement. They have highlighted the importance of goal-directed care and that a focus on client outcomes in hand with good communication are necessary to shift client expectations towards doing with, rather than doing for.

For those living in residential aged care facilities

the current funding model does not fund reablement programs, however some providers are delivering a stronger reablement focus (see AAG fact sheet 3).

Ultimately reablement is also about an approach to care that puts a person's choices and independence at the centre.

Overall, reablement can be provided for any older person with loss of confidence or loss of physical or mental function to help them maintain independence and societal participation for as long as possible.

We are likely to see more evidence about the benefits and approaches to reablement in the future including the role of assistive technologies. **Download the fact sheets from [aag.asn.au/news/unpacking-reablement](http://aag.asn.au/news/unpacking-reablement)** ■

