

# Aged Care: What do We Want from the Next Government?

Tuesday, 16 July 2013

5:00pm – 7:00pm

# Summary of Presentation

The Living Longer Living Better (LLLBB) Aged Care Reform Package has been the subject of momentous debate among aged care industry peak bodies, providers and other stakeholder groups.

With the federal election looming and the possibility of great change for the aged care sector, this is a pivotal time in considering what we want from the next federal government. With this in mind, the WA Division delivered an event which invited people to hear from three aged care industry leaders about their aspirations for the future of the sector and debate what the industry would like to see happen in the next government term. The event, held on 16 July 2013, was attended by clinicians, service providers, academics, state government employees, members of parliament, consumers and carers.

**Rhonda Parker**, CEO of Alzheimer's Australia, WA and a former Minister in the Western Australian Government, discussed what Alzheimer's Australia believes is needed urgently from the Australian Government to support people living with dementia, their families and carers. She drew on points from the Alzheimer's Australia Fight Dementia Campaign Election 2013 manifesto and combined these with personal identifications on what is needed in the aged care sector.

Her first point was that the next federal government needs to manage change well and reflected on some of difficulties faced when the Aged Care Act 1997 was implemented.

For people with dementia she argued that we currently have very poorly defined care pathways. Alzheimer's Australia are advocating for the expansion of community care services so that all older Australians have a choice about where they receive care. Currently it is not clear for people where they can access services and waitlists for EACH-D care packages are long.

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Rhonda also argued for the expansion of dementia specific respite and an increase in quality of care for people with dementia in residential aged care, further funding and expansion of the National Younger Onset Dementia Key Worker Program is also needed. In addition, Alzheimer's Australia would like to see the federal government commit to an investment of \$200 million in dementia research over the next five years and to the establishment of a National Action Framework on Dementia.

Rhonda concluded by saying that Dementia has become personal for so many in the community, let's use this as an opportunity to drive change.

**Patricia Mitchell**, Community Care Manager at Aged and Community Services WA argued that the federal government needs to push back to the recommendations of the Productivity Commission Report as this was a truer reflection of providers feedback on the aged care sector than the LLLB Aged Care Reform Package. At the moment we are in a process of transition for the community, carers and service providers and we need to ensure the system provides the right outcomes for older people.

Patricia stated that while some elements of the LLLB reform package are very positive, such as the development of the National LGBTI and National Culturally Linguistic Diverse Ageing and Aged Care strategies, other elements are in need of development, such as carer support funding and the application for the Dementia supplement. In addition, the *My Aged Care* Gateway provides some inaccurate advice on access to services across states and some functions of the website are not working.

Some of the actions ACSWA would like to see in the next government term outlined by Patricia included streamlining service provision and funding, letting demand dictate the distribution of aged care packages, increased support to rural and remote community providers to support sustainable futures and understand the uniqueness of Western Australia.

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**Ray Glickman**, CEO of Amana Living and Chairman of Aged and Community Services WA, described in his presentation his campaign for a better deal for older Australians. This year he has given several presentations entitled 'Geriatric Strike!', where he invites the audience to imagine what would happen if older people became sick and tired of living in the modern, youth orientated world and withdrew their labour, finance and wisdom. He describes a world where older children are forced to move out of home, grandparents no longer voluntarily take care of grandchildren, older magistrates leave the court, older people only vote for mature candidates and invest money in products such as dentures and odour-hiding underwear. This eye-opening, albeit imaginary scenario reinforced the understanding of the massive contribution that older people make to society. They have massive economic and electoral power. Ray argued that older people and indeed those who represent them need to be more vocal and less tolerant so that they can get a better deal from society.

Ray went on to say that the Rudd/Gillard government have "missed a golden opportunity" for reform as the Productivity Commission report was a great piece of work that was generally supported by consumers and most industry advisors, however opportunity was not taken to follow the report recommendations. Elements of the LLLB reform package such as the Workforce Supplement were more in line with politicians own desires than the Productivity Commission Report and he argues the Reform package merely "fiddles around the edges of a system that's already broken". A major crisis is here for the aged care industry and the onus is on the next federal government to recognise this.

Ray concluded his presentation by calling for the next federal government to go back to the fundamentals of the productivity commission report.