

Quality of Care and Standards in Residential Aged Care – The Australian Experience

Dr Rodney Jilek
Aged Care Clinical Adviser

Background

- The aged care sector in Australia includes community aged care and residential aged care for those over 65 years of age
- Last year, 82,668 people were able to remain living in their own home with the assistance of a home care package
- 226,042 people were provided with permanent residential aged care and 48,182 people received residential respite to allow their carer to have a break in 2,718 aged care homes
- The annual government budget allocated to aged care services across Australia is 13.3 billion

Background

- The aged care sector in Australia is highly regulated and controlled with the commonwealth government acting as both funder and regulator
- In 1997, new legislation, the “*Aged Care Act 1997*” was passed and included a nationally consistent multi pronged approach to the funding, regulation and accreditation and complaints management in aged care services

The National Approach

- **Funding** – based upon the assessed care needs of residents (provided by government) + resident contributions where they can afford to do so
- **Regulation & Compliance** – approved provider responsibilities
- **Accreditation** – an accreditation system based upon 4 standards and 44 outcomes
- **Complaints Management** – a resolution based system designed to assist approved providers and complainants to resolve differences

Funding

- **Government Funding** – up to \$183 per day per resident
- **Resident Daily Fee** - 85% of their pension + extra only if they can afford it
- Safety net in place to ensure residents who are unable to pay extra are able to access care

Regulation

- Based upon the responsibilities outlined in the *Aged Care Act 1997*
- All facets of the industry are regulated including approval as a provider, allocation of beds, fees schedules and provider responsibilities

Compliance

- Based upon the responsibilities outlined in the *Aged Care Act 1997*
- Can be as a result of complaints scheme intervention, from referral by the accreditation body or direct compliance action by the Department
- Ultimate compliance action is sanction with immediate and extended financial and reputational implications

Accreditation

- Managed by an independent accreditation body based upon the standards defined in the *Aged Care Act 1997* who conducted over 5,500 audits last year
- Four Standards:
 - 1: Management systems, staffing and organisational development
 - 2: Health and personal care
 - 3: Resident lifestyle
 - 4: Physical environment and safe systems
- 44 more descriptive outcomes under these standards

Complaints Management

- A free process under the Complaints Resolution Scheme
- Has been refined a number of times since 1997 to reflect different government priorities
- Deals with approximately 12 - 13,000 contacts each year

Conclusion

- Since 1997, the Australian aged care sector has undergone enormous change with the introduction of new expected standards of care and environment
- This multi-faceted approach has been extremely successful in providing a framework for providers, residents and the government to work together within a culture of continuous improvement





