

INDUSTRY UPDATE – SEPTEMBER

OCT 18TH, 2018 | [ARTICLE](#)

What a month we have had in the industry in September. A Royal Commission was announced, and the media and public is full of talk, questions and opinions. The Four Corners investigation into Australian Aged Care was aired which added to the conversation, putting the spotlight on the industry and throwing a great deal of negativity into the air. This broadcast has thrown panic and fear for both potential residents having to enter care and family members who have residents currently in care; and significantly increased the workloads of Facility Management teams dealing with the fallout and questioning of their care delivery. To add to the focus on Aged Care, the Aged Care Quality Standards were officially legislated, and the workforce strategy was released. Dementia Awareness month kicked off, encouraging a better understanding of the disease and awareness across the country; and peak body Aged & Community Services Australia (ACSA) launched their Humans of Aged Care story telling platform! Let's dive into the busy month of news for September.

ROYAL COMMISSION

On the 16th September, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced the decision to establish a [Royal Commission into the Aged Care industry](#); predominantly investigating the quality of care provided to older Australians. The Royal Commission came just before the release of the Four Corners investigation into the industry, and will cover Residential and Home Care, and the care of Young Australians living in Residential Care. The Government followed the announcement of the Royal Commission with a statement that the number of Aged Care complaints received had [risen by 23%](#) over the past 12 months. Of these complaints, it was reported in The Aged Care Complaints Commissioner's 2017–18 annual report that 1,073 cases were referred to the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency, a jump of 130%; however 73% of complaints registered were resolved within 30 days and 93% of complaints were resolved within 90 days.

Following the announcement of the Royal Commission, almost [\\$500 million was wiped off the share prices](#) of the some of Australia's largest Aged Care Providers.

Overall, the industry has welcomed the news of a Royal Commission. You can read the responses to the Royal Commission given by ACSA [here](#) and Leading Aged Services Australia (LASA) [here](#). Consumer Advocacy Group Council on the Ageing (COTA) have also released [a list of the top concerns](#) they believe need to be addressed in the sector.

Russell Kennedy Lawyers, who are Aged Care & Retirement Living legal specialists, have released some information on guidance for Providers for the next stage of the Royal Commission process. You can [read their alert here](#).

FOUR CORNERS INVESTIGATION

On the heels of the announcement of the Royal Commission, the Four Corners 2-part investigation 'Who Cares?' into the Australian Aged Care sector aired on ABC in mid September. The crowd sourced investigation into the failings of Aged Care in Australia included hidden camera footage and interviews with the families of alleged victims.

The program has caused a huge wave of media coverage and public interest in the industry. The industry has [reacted with horror](#) at the stories presented on Four Corners, labelling them unacceptable and inexcusable and the sector has ['no room' for that kind of care](#). The industry has also expressed that the stories presented on the Four Corners investigation did not reflect the exceptional care and hard work that the majority of the industry bring to the sector every day.

The investigation has also brought to light the complex issue of CCTV cameras in Aged Care. Highlighting a number legal, ethical and privacy issues, the issue of CCTV cameras has been [flagged by COTA CEO Ian Yates](#) as something that needs to be explored by the Royal Commission.

You can view the first part of 'Who Cares?' [here](#) and the second part [here](#).

DEMENTIA AWARENESS

September was Dementia Awareness month! Dementia Australia ran their annual national campaign throughout September, with the theme of 'Small actions Big difference'. You can read more on the campaign [here](#).

Dementia Australia also responded to the Four Corners investigation in September in a media release stating that ['dementia urgently needs to be core business in Aged Care'](#); and the Royal Commission announcement by calling for [solutions to be its priority focus](#). CEO of Dementia Australia Maree McCabe highlighted the necessity for education and skill building for the workforce working with people with dementia and continues calls for quality standards around dementia care.

QUALITY CARE FUND

On the 20th September, the Quality Care Fund came into effect as an additional daily ACFI subsidy. The Quality Care Fund will be valid from 20th September 2018 to 30th June 2019 and is to assist Providers to transition to the new quality standards. You can view the Quality Care Fund additional daily subsidy rates in our [2018 ACFI Rates Table](#).

STAFFING RATIOS

Staffing ratios have been a huge topic in Aged Care for some time now. A new [inquiry into the Aged Care Amendment](#) (Staffing Ratio Disclosure) Bill 2018 proposes a quarterly publication of staff to resident ratios. Rebekha Sharkie, Australian House of Representatives member, proposed the inquiry in August. You can read more on the bill [here](#).

The Queensland Health Minister stated in September that Aged Care is '[more than just a numbers game](#)'. This comes on the back of the Governments' Aged Care Workforce Taskforce rejecting mandatory staffing ratios in June, noting that it would not necessarily mean better outcomes. The Australian Financial Review also [reported on a cost analysis](#) conducted by the Aged Care Guild that indicated how mandated staffing ratios could potentially mean \$5 billion in additional costs for Aged Care Providers.

\$106M FUNDING INJECTION

A further \$106M of funding was announced for Aged Care, with the aim of supporting quality for both care and facilities in the industry. The boost to funds will be put into supporting the transition to the new Quality Standards, the new Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and helping regional and remote Aged Care services.

You can read the Government's release on the funding injection [here](#).

ACSA'S HUMANS OF AGED CARE

In a beautiful initiative, peak body ACSA have launched a social media campaign and platform called Humans of Aged Care. The aim of the campaign is to demonstrate the positive, beautiful and inspirational aspects of our industry, through storytelling. The stories can be told by anyone who is in Aged Care – Residents, volunteers and the workforce. Read the full report on the launch of Humans of Aged Care [here](#).

AGED CARE WORKFORCE TASKFORCE REPORT

In September, The Aged Care Workforce Taskforce [released a strategy report](#) to dramatically grow Australia's Aged Care workforce. The report, 'A matter of care – a strategy for Australia's aged care workforce' was developed in conjunction with the industry and recognised issues such as the growing complex needs of older Australians, career pathways for workers and the need to triple the workforce over the next 30-odd years. ACSA CEO and member of the Workforce Taskforce, Pat Sparrow, has highlighted the urgency of [solving the workforce issues](#).

You [can read the report here](#).

AGED CARE QUALITY STANDARDS LEGISLATED

The [Aged Care \(Single Quality Framework\) Reform Bill 2018](#) has been officially passed through Parliament and will come into effect from 1 July 2019. The new standards are the first upgrade of the Aged Care standards in 20 years.

With the Aged Care Quality & Safety Commission commencing from 1 January 2019, the changes to the standards are set to streamline assessment across the previous four sets of standards (Residential Care, Home Care, Aboriginal Flexible Care and Transition Care Standards). [LASA have welcomed the new standards](#), highlighting that they reflect current evidence on the best ways to deliver quality care.

A [consultation period for the draft single Charter of Aged Care Rights](#), part of the Single Aged Care Quality Framework that will replace the existing four charters, opened for public consultation, closing on the 10th October 2018.

NURSE PRACTITIONERS ABLE TO DIAGNOSE FOR ACFI APPRAISALS

A recent release from the Department of Health has advised that a diagnosis made by a Nurse Practitioner will now be considered permissible evidence for the purposes of ACFI, providing the diagnosis is made within their scope of practice. You can read the full release, and the details on how to complete the ACFI Answer Appraisal pack in these circumstances [here](#).

FUNDING TO KEEP OLDER AUSTRALIANS MOVING

Another initiative announced with the 2018-19 budget is springing into action with the [Move it Aus – Better Ageing program](#) launching in September. \$22.9M in grants are now available to national sporting organisations and physical activity providers. The 2018-19 federal budget revealed the Government's attention to encouraging older Australians to live long, healthier lives as a part of the More Choices For A Longer Life package.

Grant applications are accepted up until 31st October. To find out more information head to the Sports Australia [Move it Aus – Better Ageing page](#).

CYBERSECURITY & TECHNOLOGY IN AGED CARE

Cybersecurity is a hot topic in most industries, and it is no exception in the Aged Care sector. A [recent report](#) conducted by The Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) has found that [not-for-profit Directors in the sector are 'struggling' with cybersecurity](#) and there is a lack of attention being paid to the issue of a cyber-attack.

As digital trends become more important for Aged Care Providers to meet the needs of Residents and their families, business management software Epicor's Director of Product Marketing, Rachel Clayton, [has spoken to Australian Ageing Agenda](#). Highlighting the importance of multiple stakeholders in the application process of a Resident, Providers could be left behind if they do not offer services digitally.

NEW WAYS OF GIVING CARE

Each month brings a wonderful array of new models, approaches and innovations to Aged Care in Australia. September was no different, with some exciting care initiatives reported on in Victoria and New South Wales.

Warrigal in New South Wales has been [piloting a model](#) that focuses on choice and shifting language and actions for a number of different aspects of daily life in Residential Care. This includes focusing on relationships (carers are called companions, Residents are called customers), collecting life stories, and even running an app that allows relatives to see what their family have been up to in the facility. Suitably titled 'The Warrigal Way', the model intends to change mindsets about ageing, engage customers at all levels of the organisation and also include the community by having an onsite café / bistro available to the public.

In Victoria, Provider [Benetas has completed construction of their first purpose built facility](#) that has genuine home-like environments with the aim of focusing care around the individual needs and wants of Residents. The development consists of apartments, each with eight bedrooms complete with ensuites. The apartments also have dining and living areas, a kitchen, and the development gives access to multiple facilities such as a café, cinema and wellness centre!

CALLS TO CHANGE PENSION RATES

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has stated in an interview that the gradual pension age increase – set to rise 6 months every 2 years until it reached age 70 in the year 2035 – [would no longer occur](#), and the pension age would remain at 67.

In related news, the rates for the [Age and Disability Support Pensions were raised](#) by \$8.20 per fortnight for singles and \$12.40 per fortnight for couples (to \$834.40 and \$1,258.00 respectively) from 20 September. Additionally, a higher limit to income and asset tests also came into effect; increasing to \$564,000 of assets for a single home owner (an increase of \$2,750) and \$848,000 for couples (combined) who own a home (an increase of \$4,000).

Advocacy group National Seniors Australia and The Benevolent Society have created the campaign '[Fix Pension Poverty](#)', to recognise that many older Australians living on the Pension are [living below the poverty line](#), and to ensure a fairer system.

CHANGES TO HOME CARE LEGISLATION

Changes will be made to [Home Care Legislation](#) that means Home Care Providers will be legally required to publish existing pricing information on the My Aged Care website by the 30th November 2018.

The Department of Health has offered a [reference guide](#) of what Providers need to supply to the My Aged Care website.

REGIONAL, RURAL AND REMOTE INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS NOW OPEN

The \$40M of funding announced for regional, rural and remote Aged Care Providers in the 2018-19 budget has opened for grant applications. Successful grants will be for up to \$500,000 per service, and can be applied for via [Grant Connect](#).

That's all for this month but check back in with us next month for another industry update!

See more at: <https://providerassist.com.au/news-resources/>



LISSIE LYONS – CHAMPION OF PROJECTS & INNOVATION
Author