INDUSTRY UPDATE – DECEMBER

JAN 11TH, 2019 | ARTICLE

Farewell 2018 and welcome to a brand new year! What a year 2018 was for the industry. We faced the announcement of the Royal Commission, widespread and controversial media coverage, budget highs and lows. Confronted with many challenges, the industry was, as always, resilient in the face of adversities and we know that we are ready for the year that is ahead with the Royal Commission continuing and a pending election. But just before we leap into our 2019, let's take a look at the news from December 2018 that hit the industry.

FUNDING BOOST TO AGED CARE

December's Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) saw an increase to Aged Care funding of $552.9 million. The funding included 10,000 additional Home Care Packages, increase in viability and homelessness supplements, and support for GPs to visit regional Aged Care facilities. The funding boost in the MYEFO was welcomed by the industry, however there have still been concerns that Providers struggling financially are unlikely to benefit. Home Care received the most significant increase in funding; but in terms of financial assistance, Residential Care did not receive any additional boosts on top of the viability and homelessness supplement increase. You can read the responses to the MYEFO from Aged & Community Services Australia (ACSA) here and Leading Aged Services Australia (LASA) here.

ROYAL COMMISSION

Another big month in December for Royal Commission news. With 5 years of Resident information having to be collated by at least 100 organisations and sent in by January 7, we know that many Executive teams were working very long hours and over the Christmas break to achieve the deadline.

Mid-December saw Justice Joseph McGrath step down from his role as commissioner for 'personal family reasons'. In his place and joining Lynelle Briggs AO, is retired Federal Court judge Richard Tracey AM RFD QC. December also saw the announcement of the first important dates; with a preliminary hearing to be held on the 18th January, and the first witnesses to appear in February.

The commissioners have also officially called for public submissions in late December.

The Government has established Legal Financial Assistance for Providers to assist with those who have been called as witnesses, requested to attend, provide

evidence or comply with a notice from the Royal Commission. Providers will be eligible for the assistance if undertaking any obligations for the Commission will result in financial hardship. For further information and updates on the Royal Commission, visit the official website here.

STAFFING RATIOS BILL

The staffing ratios bill was again a big topic for December. The Advisory Report with recommendations on the Aged Care Amendment (Staffing Ratio Disclosure) Bill 2018 was released; highlighting the recommendation to introduce mandatory minimum staffing levels and increasing transparency and access to staffing information at Aged Care facilities.

The release of the six recommendations have been commented on by peak bodies ACSA, LASA and the Aged Care Guild. ACSA has written a submission to the Committee Chair and Deputy Chair to ask for the consideration of the Bill to be referred to the Royal Commission. You can read a summary of their considerations of Staffing Ratios here. The peak bodies all highlight their support for sustainable staffing and high-level, quality care.

A study conducted by the Australian Industrial Transformation Institute, at Flinders University, has released findings that staffing ratios in Aged Care would save $2.6 billion. The initial 2016 study, commissioned by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF), has further examined the research and stated that the savings in productivity and economic gains were found, regardless of the cost of funding staff increases, due to factors such as decreased staff turnover. You can read the report from 2016 here.

CONSUMER EXPERIENCE REPORT

The Aged Care Quality & Safety Commission have released a two-page Consumer Experience Report, an aspect of reaccreditation audits conducted on Aged Care facilities between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018. The report shows a predominantly positive experience reported by Residents. The factors that have been reported on as the biggest areas for improvement, are food and someone to talk to.

The report has been developed from over 15,000 random interviews with Residents, collected from over 1,100 facilities.

OFFLINE RESIDENTIAL PLACES

A survey to review Residential Care Offline Places was undertaken from 26th November 2018 to 7th December 2018, as a part of a recommendation by the Tune Review. The review intended to gain information from Aged Care Providers to determine the reasons why there are unused Aged Care places, known as Offline

places. The responses from the review are intended to assist with policy solutions in the future.

QUALITY & AGED CARE COMMISSION STARTS JAN 1

The new Aged Care Quality & Safety Commission kicked off on the 1st January 2019, with the legislation passed in late 2018 to deliver over $300 million of funding to the Commission over the next four years.

In related news for New South Wales, an independent NSW Commissioner will be appointed for Ageing and Disability. Established to investigate abuse and mistreatment, the commissioner will be able to initiate investigations and follow up on complaints and will work with a specially trained Police Elder Abuse Officers. The commissioner will have strong powers in order to investigate cases and will be established from 1 July 2019.

ON-SITE PHARMACIST

After a successful 6-month pilot, an ACT based Aged Care Provider has hit a first for the industry, hiring an on-site pharmacist to work across the its facilities. Goodwin Aged Care ran the pilot to trial the effectiveness of having an on-site pharmacist to reduce medication errors and risk from side effects. The accredited pharmacist, Richard Thorpe, who was also the pharmacist involved in the trial, will work with Goodwin specialists to conduct medication reviews and provide clinical interventions.

HUMANS OF AGED CARE

Reported back in our September 2018 Industry Update, ACSA had launched a storytelling platform called Humans of Aged Care, which officially went live in December. The platform aims to share stories of those who are dedicated to the industry and care for older Australians, and at the same time balancing some of the negative media surrounding the industry. Nominations for inspiring individuals who work in Aged Care can be submitted to the Humans of Aged Care website. A fantastic initiative!

DEMENTIA

Exciting news for Dementia Australia in December, who have partnered with Dementia Alliance International. Dementia Australia is the first national dementia association to affiliate with Dementia Alliance International, a global advocacy organisation for people living with dementia. The partnership will bring both organisations together to continue working on raising awareness and understanding of dementia. You can read further on the partnership here and here.

In other news for Dementia Australia, an app created by the organisation has been launched, designed to assist in connection and communication for the people and loved ones of those living with dementia. A Better Visit is free to download on to your iPad, and facilitates better social interactions between those living with dementia and their friends and families by utilising two player games.

Another initiative in dementia news is the Government's Specialist Dementia Care Program (SDCP), that will be running its pilot service in 2019. The initiative was announced in 2016, after specialist care units were called for to help facilities with Residents with severe behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia. Brightwater Care Group in Western Australia has been selected to run the prototype service. After this service has been established, a competitive selection process will open in 2019 for 14 specialist dementia care units, with the first units operational in 2020.

2017 – 2018 REPORT ON THE OPERATION OF THE AGED CARE ACT 1997

Released in late 2018, the 2017 – 2018 Report on the Operation of the Aged Care Act 1997 has provided an overview of the Aged Care system. The report details figures such as the number of approved Providers, Residents living with dementia, sanction notices issued and non-compliance notices. You can read the Australian Ageing Agenda's brief summary of the report here.
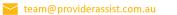
UPDATE TO ACFI COMPLEX HEALTH CARE – PAIN MANAGEMENT (12.3 AND 12.4)

As reported in our November Industry Update, the Department of Health withdrew the advice they had published in the FAQs regarding Allied Health professionals with limited registration not being eligible to provide pain management treatments. In December, the Department has confirmed that Allied Health professionals with limited registration are able to provide complex pain management services. You can read more here.

HOME CARE

It has been a point in the news almost every month since the budget release: there are not enough home care places to meet demand. The Government's Home Care Packages program data report for the period 1 July – 30 September 2018 confirmed that too many older Australians were still without the care they needed, with over 120,000 waiting for a Home Care package and wait times that could go beyond 12 months. In welcome news, in the MYEFO December, the Government announced a boost in funding to the Aged Care sector – including 10,000 new high-level home care packages to be available in the first half of 2019. Another $56.4 million has been allocated to reduce maximum daily fees. Although the funding of 5,000 Level Three packages and 5,000 Level Four packages is a much-needed boost, according to research demand continues to grow along with Australia's ageing population.

COTA and RMIT are also working together to design and pilot a new self-management, CDC-based model that would empower those in the Home Care system.

AGEISM

A national study undertaken to explore the feelings of Australians over 50 has highlighted the issue of ageism that exists in the country. The State of the (Older) Nation 2018 Report, launched by the Council of the Ageing (COTA), shows that nearly half of those investigated felt less valued at their age than when they were younger and more than a quarter had experienced age discrimination. You can read Talking Aged Care's wrap up of the Report here.

The Benevolent Society launched its EveryAGE Counts campaign in 2018, with a vision to ensure "a society where every person is valued, connected and respected regardless of age and health".

TECHNOLOGY

An exciting month for technological innovations at the end of 2018, with a companion robot moving into a Queensland Retirement village. Designed by a Brisbane start-up tech company, Conpago, Pepper is the first robot to be placed. Pepper's software system is similar to the core of a smartphone – using calling, text messages and calendar functions – and is used to remind people to take their medication, their schedules and can recognise faces and emotions. The technology is not cheap, costing approximately $40,000, however is intended to help combat loneliness, empowering and engaging older people. You can read more about the Conpago software and Pepper here.

In other technological news, there have been new developments in tech to help people to stay in their own homes for longer. The Government has recently invested $260,000 worth of funding for IT company Ericom to trial a home monitoring system, Monitoring Data Response Solution (MDRS). The system would enable a nominated individual, such as a family member to receive updates when a care recipient's usual routine is changed, or shows signs of something not quite right, that could be deterioration in health or wellbeing. Ericom will trial their monitoring service with Aged Care Providers in 2019.

RETIREMENT VILLAGE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Retirement Living Code of Conduct is a new initiative, developed by the Retirement Living Council and LASA, in consultation with village operators, stakeholders and Residents. The Code of Conduct has been created in order to create transparency covering all processes of entering, living in, and leaving a retirement community. The code operates in line with state and territory laws and

regulations and will be rolled out over 2019, with it going into full effect on 1 January 2020.

MULTICULTURAL CARE

A newly established community service provider, Multicultural Care Assist (MCA), is collaborating with Australian Unity to improve access to Aged Care for Vietnamese and Indo-Chinese in Victoria. The initiative aims for targeted and more culturally responsive care packages to be supplied to these communities, who may have limited understanding of Government services.

A Queensland based facility is also revamping their building to be more culturally sensitive, technologically advanced and have spaces to foster diversity and connection. The Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland plans for the building to address the cultural needs of Residents, as well as be a state of the art facility for high-level care and dementia.

COOKBOOK MADE OF MEMORIES, HISTORY & STORIES

A beautiful initiative to celebrate Resident's lives and history comes from a cookbook, *Pinches & Handfuls*. Created at Opal Aged Care Endeavour Home, the book started as a conversation between the Lifestyle Coordinator and a Resident, talking about her memories of cooking with her family. This grew into a beautiful collection of stories and recipes that were captured and recorded in their various forms and turned into a cookbook! The recipe book is now available to purchase, with all proceeds donated to Dementia Australia.

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/

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