

INDUSTRY UPDATE – APRIL

MAY 17TH, 2019 | **ARTICLE**

Straight into the second quarter for the year, and with it, the announcement of an upcoming election. Whilst a bit quieter on the Royal Commission front, the federal budget was released, with no real new announcements for the industry. The Aged Care Commission appointed its first Chief Clinical Advisor and this time of the year has brought flu vaccinations back to the forefront of news. The mental health and care for the conditions of Aged Care workers was a big topic this month and the CCTV debate has turned into trials rolling out in South Australia. The upcoming election is an underlying theme to many aspects of the industry news this month, as the sector waits to see what will happen come the middle of May. Let's look back at the month of April!

BUDGET NEWS

April saw the release of the 2019-2020 federal budget, and with it, nothing new for Aged Care. With the announcement of a \$662M funding boost in February – including the \$320M funding injection and 10,000 additional Home Care packages – there was very little to report on with the majority of measures already announced. The \$320M funding injection, that will be paid from 20th March 2019 to the 30th June 2019, has been described as [providing temporary assistance to Aged Care facilities, but does not lead towards a sustainable future](#).

Whilst there were no real surprises in the budget for Aged Care, there are a number of funding allocations, including an overall estimated increase of \$3.7B for total Aged Care funding; 10,000 additional Home Care packages; \$2.6M to implement the Aged Care Workforce Strategy and \$5.6M to improve compliance, quality and safety for Home Care services. You can read further on the additional funding allocations for Aged Care in the [Aged Care Guide's budget wrap up here](#), or view the [Federal Budget here](#).

The industry and peak bodies responded to the budget with an overall message that whilst the budget initiatives are welcomed, there are [still many urgent issues that need to be addressed](#) and there are [still many gaps that need to be addressed](#). You can read [ACSA's media release here](#); LASA's [budget wrap up here](#) and COTA's budget [rundown here](#).

ELECTION

With the federal election looming, the media has been [abuzz with election promises](#), and calls from peak bodies, consumer bodies and industry leaders [to ensure political parties focus on the urgent changes required for the Aged Care industry](#). Leading Age Services Australia (LASA) launched their ['I care for Aged Care' campaign](#) in March; National Seniors Australia have released a [Federal Election 2019 Policy Priorities of Older Australians](#); Aged & Community Services Australia (ACSA) have announced an 'Election Statement 2019' with [5 urgent Aged Care priorities](#), and Dementia Australia has [called for Australians to engage their local candidates](#) to make change happen this election.

AGED CARE COMMISSION FIRST CHIEF CLINICAL ADVISOR

April saw the [appointment of the Australian Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's first Chief Clinical Advisor](#) (CCA), Dr Melanie Wroth. The role of the CCA had been temporarily filled by the Associate Professor Michael Murray, who will now step down from his interim role.

The Chief Clinical Advisor role will see [Dr Wroth provide 'expert clinical advice'](#) to the Commission, as well as helping to guide Aged Care Providers through best practice clinical care. This guidance will also extend to the sector to raise awareness surrounding clinical and related issues.

The appointment is a timely one, as Commissioner Janet Anderson has stated, as the sector moves towards the new Quality Standard roll out from July 1 2019.

Dr Wroth has a vast history in geriatric medicine, beginning in 1990, and has been working in a teaching capacity since 2010. Dr Wroth's position as CCA began on the 10th May.

ROYAL COMMISSION

No Royal Commission hearings or community forums were held in April, but [the scope of May Sydney hearings was set](#). A senate inquiry into aged care quality assessment and accreditation, that commenced in June 2017, tabled their final report in April and recommended that the Government needs to ['take steps to make it clear that residential aged care providers ultimately hold a duty of care to all residents'](#). You can read the report, 'Effectiveness of the Aged Care Quality Assessment and accreditation framework for protecting residents from abuse and poor practices, and ensuring proper clinical and medical care standards are maintained and practised' [here](#).

Aged & Community Services Australia (ACSA) are also [pushing for action to be taken by the political parties, before the Royal Commission gives its recommendations](#). In their 'Election Statement 2019' Media Release in April, ACSA specified 5 urgent priorities that need to be actioned and resolved by the Government in the short term, without needing the investigation and consideration that many other topics required. You can read [the 5 urgent Aged Care priorities here](#).

With a great deal of media reports surrounding the Royal Commission, the [Aged Care Guide](#), [Australian Ageing Agenda](#) and [The Weekly Source](#) are excellent sources of information. You can also access live and past hearings via the Royal Commission webcast channel [here](#).

WHISTLEBLOWER REGULATIONS

New whistleblower regulations will come into effect on July 1 2019, which will apply to all Aged Care Providers, including Not for Profit organisations. The [Treasury Laws Amendment \(Enhancing Whistleblower Protections\) Act 2019](#), among other amendments, is expanding to provide protection to both current – and former – officers and directors, employees, contractors, suppliers, unpaid workers, and any employee's relatives or dependants. This is [especially significant for Aged Care Providers with more people now being identified as eligible whistleblowers](#), and the requirement to have a whistleblower policy in place. The topic of whistleblowers was raised at the second round of the Royal Commission hearings, with the Commissioner Richard Tracey stating a warning towards any Provider or Government agency putting pressure on potential whistleblowers.

You can read further on the [amendments to the Act here](#).

CCTV TRIALS

The topic of [CCTV and Aged Care has been very prevalent in the media this past year](#), particularly following the airing of the Four Corners 2-part investigation 'Who cares?' in September 2018. Now, a [trial of CCTV cameras in a number of South Australian facilities will be](#) installed and rolled out later this year. Lasting 1 year, the trial is a Government investment of \$500,000 and managed by a third party contractor – [Care Protect](#). St Basil's Homes, also located in South Australia, [will also trial the Care Protect technology](#) and is the first privately-run organisation to do so. The CCTV technology will detect noise, light changes and movement that is considered 'excessive', which triggers an alert. This alert reaches a reviewer who is able to view and assess the footage within seconds of the alert.

The installation of cameras in Resident bedrooms is with Resident or their family's consent, and they will also be installed in common areas. The Care Protect technology will also enable families to watch their relatives in care via their phones, for 3 minutes every 2 hours.

Upon completion of the pilot, [the findings will be used to inform the future use of CCTV technology in Aged Care](#) facilities across Australia.

You can learn more about the [Care Protect technology here](#).

FLU VACCINATION UPTAKE LOW IN THE HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY

May 2018 saw the introduction of the mandate that all Government-subsidised [Aged Care Providers must provide free flu shots](#) to all employees working in facilities. The mandate came on the back of a horror flu season in 2017, with 1,100 flu related deaths. The mandate did not make the flu vaccine compulsory for employees.

The flu vaccine has once again hit the news at the same time of year with a warning that a summer flu has been reported in larger numbers this year. As a result, [vaccines have been distributed earlier than usual](#) to counteract the potentially fatal effects for at-risk groups. The early outbreak of the flu has led to [an alarming projection that the 2019 flu season will claim up to 4,000 lives](#), with the elderly at the greatest risk.

The [Department of Health has released figures for the 2018 uptake of the flu vaccine](#) for health workers, reporting that only just over 50% of nurses, doctors and other health workers were vaccinated.

In NSW, the reported 27 outbreaks for the first quarter of the year was made up of [17 Aged Care facilities](#). With the risk to elderly people and Aged Care facility outbreaks an enormous issue, a new rapid response team in Sydney is currently being rolled out as part of a pilot program involving 63 Aged Care facilities. A [team of research nurses are responding to reports of the flu via a mobile response unit](#), testing the potentially affected people and having a rapid diagnosis available within 30 minutes. The result being that the rapid diagnosis can contribute to a faster treatment, and enabling the containment of a spread of the illness and keeping other Residents safe. The data is being analysed by a Sydney University PhD student.

APPLICATIONS FOR NEW SPECIALIST DEMENTIA CARE UNITS OPEN

A [new round of locations and funding for 12 Specialist Dementia Care Units \(SDCU\) have been announced](#); in addition to a further two units offered to dementia Provider HammondCare, and the prototype service at Brightwater Care Group in Perth that will be operational by July 2019. All 14 new units are expected to be completed and operational from April 2020. The application process for the new SDCU opened on 2 April 2019, and will close on the 28 May 2019. The process will be undertaken through the [GrantConnect website](#).

The SDCUs have been designed to care for those who display 'severe behaviours' and therefore may not be adequately cared for in mainstream care.

ADVANCED CARE DIRECTIVE TOOL

The [1st to the 5th April was National Advance Care Planning week](#). Run by [Advance Care Planning Australia](#), the Government funded initiative supports host events and supplies resources to start the difficult conversations that need to be had around planning for a future of care, for those who reach a time when they are no longer able to speak for themselves due to issues such as illness, dementia or old age.

April also saw the launch of new tech for advance care planning – [an online tool that empowers people to take charge of their future care and aligning it to their own personalised values](#). ExSitu is digital tool that enables an individual to create their own advance care directive accounting for clinical and medical requirements, as well as personal values, beliefs and including the protective documentation that can be shared and signed via the tool. Created and developed by two former IRT Group employees as a part of the IRT Group's Innovation Challenge, ExSitu is currently being trialled in both IRT's Home and Residential Care divisions. Learn more about [ExSitu here](#).

NEW INITIATIVE TO HELP KEEP OLDER PEOPLE MORE MOBILE

A [\\$29.2M trial was launched in April](#), aiming to keep older Australians in their homes for longer by supporting mobility and independence. The 'Seniors Reablement Trial for Independence and Mobility' is a part of the Government's *More Choices for a Longer Life*, promoting better ageing by focusing on a individual's strengths and goals to sustain independence.

The [reablement program trial will run across locations on Tasmania, the Northern Territory, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia](#), rolled out by Regional Assessment Service (RAS) organisations and assessing older Australians applying for the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP). It involves an assessment of individual's current mobility, and then [provides a 6-8 week reablement program with coaching](#) and the basic resources, equipment or technology required.

A conversation about the program being something that is also run in Residential Aged Care facilities has also been sparked post the announcement – you can [read more on the interesting opinions surrounding this here](#).

AGE WELL CAMPAIGN

April also saw the launch of the [Age Well campaign](#), a national campaign that is [calling for action on urgent sector reform](#). The National Aged Care Alliance (NACA), comprised of 51

Aged Care organisations – from Providers, to peak bodies, consumer groups, unions and health professionals – is asking for urgent action to be taken on both the considerable Home Care wait list and making a commitment to investing in a high quality workforce.

The launch came ahead of the Federal Election announcement; [with NACA believing that there are crucial matters that need to be addressed](#) by the Government and worked on immediately.

A petition to support the *Age Well* campaign [can be signed here](#).

TECH NEWS UPDATE

More news for technology this month, with [an Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) mirror being developed that will help to identify early stages of Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's for those living at home](#). With the intention of keeping people living at home for longer, as well as reducing visits to doctors and other specialists the AI mirror is an expansion of a web application that was launched in March. The mirror, titled Lookingglass, creates a digital display, which asks the user to do evaluation exercises. The AI program will assess the exercises for symptoms and severity for Parkinson's. The Alzheimer's testing is cognitive based but the mirror will also evaluate someone by watching their activity and routines.

You can [get involved in the Lookingglass project here](#).

In other tech news, the Aged Care Industry Information Technology Council (ACIITC) is [launching a mentoring program searching for mentees to participate](#). The program underpins an overall goal, based on the finding of the 2017 *Technology Roadmap for Aged Care* in Australia, to build a 'technology-enabled' Aged Care industry in Australia. You can register your interest for the program [here](#).

DEMENTIA

To dementia news, and an interesting trial is currently taking place with people living with dementia. A study, based at the University of Notre Dame and conducted by the Institute of Health research, is [exploring the impact of medicinal cannabis on the quality of life of Aged Care Residents with dementia](#). The outcome researchers are hoping for is to see an improvement in symptoms, such as reducing aggressive behaviours and agitation, improving sleep cycles, and even increasing appetite. 50 Residents across Perth are currently completing the trial, with the medicinal cannabis being received via an oral spray.

Dementia Training Australia has also [released a new, free course for Pharmacists](#), recognising that Pharmacists are generally visited multiple times a year by those living with dementia in the community and their families. The course aims to improve the ability of pharmacists to meet the needs of those living with dementia and their families, as well as appropriate use of medication and potential alternatives.

The course, *Dementia Friendly Pharmacy*, [can be found here](#).

PAINCHEK UPDATE

In our February update, we shared a new app, PainChek, that has recently been developed as an assessment tool aimed at assisting the elderly and people living with dementia. In April, the Government announced a [\\$5M national trial to roll out PainChek across the](#)

[country](#), meaning that all Australian Residential Aged Care facilities who have Residents living with dementia will be able to implement the app for a year of access.

PainChek is currently in operation at 50 facilities across Australia and New Zealand with positive feedback.

AGED CARE FOR FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS

A large, but often overlooked issue of people entering Aged Care for the first time, is the terror that the 'forgotten Australians' – Australians who were abused as children in institutionalised care – face when [confronted with the prospect of re-entering an institution to be cared for as they age](#). Estimated at around 500,000 people who suffered these experiences, fears surrounding lack of control, medication consent and not being listened to are very real and terrifying for these Australians.

South Australian not-for profit Provider Helping Hand, [has previously established a project](#) alongside Relationships Australia South Australia to assist the Aged Care industry to better understand, support and respond to the need of the forgotten Australians in care. This project expanded into a resource guide, [Real Care the Second Time Around](#), to assist Providers with the unique care needs. In April, some more exciting news was released for the project, which will now [receive \\$500,000 of Government funding to expand on the resource into a program](#) as a partnership with Relationships Australia South Australia and Flinders University.

THE AGED CARE WORKFORCE

April saw the release of an academic report that calls for an ['urgent reform' of the working conditions of Aged Care workers](#), as well as the child care and disability sector. Undertaken by the Work and Family Policy Roundtable – 32 experts who are academic specialists on work, care and family policy, from 17 different universities – have expressed that reform for the Aged Care workforce is crucial. Released ahead of the Federal Election to take place on the 18th May, the report highlights [the need to ensure that workplaces are safe, with decent work hours, adequate pay and security](#) – something they see as lacking in the Aged Care sector.

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

Federation University, Ballarat Health Services and mental health organisation Prevention United are also [taking steps to improve the mental health of the Aged Care workforce](#). A pilot program set to run over three years is being rolled out across 500 employees of Ballarat Health Services who are working in Residential Aged Care facilities. The program, ['Wellbeing Track and Change'](#), will cost \$1.27M, and will identify how the workplace affects mental health, then utilises an online support system to assist with making changes that will support employees.

In further workforce news, [a new guide that aims to support Aged Care employees](#) to be able to work safely and provide quality care has been released, titled *The National Guide for Aged Care 2019/20*. Developed as a partnership between Pro-Visual Publishing (a health, safety and wellbeing guide publisher) and Leading Age Services Australia (LASA), Wounds Australia, Dementia Australia and Continence Foundation Australia, the guide takes the form of a 1m square poster, as well as additional resources available online. You can [find out more here](#).

RURAL & REMOTE WORKFORCE NEWS

The [rural and remote Aged Care workforce of Australia has received additional funding to expand, support and sustain the Aged Care workforce](#) in these areas with \$1.5M funding to be provided over three years. UnitingCare Australia, who is the main organisation delivering the Accord on the Remote Aged Care Workforce will be working to improve the quality of Aged Care services by collaborating with the local communities and other sectors. [An additional \\$450,000 has been allocated to Aged & Community Services Australia \(ACSA\)](#) to work with communities to build local Aged Care workforces.

AGED CARE FORMS TASKFORCE UPDATE

From May 2019, changes have been introduced to the way that older Australians apply for assistance with Aged Care services. A result of the Aged Care Forms Taskforce, which was established to help reduce the time and discomfort filling in long, complex forms that often were received completed incorrectly, the [Government has announced that a lot of the 'red-tape' has been removed](#). As a part of the means-testing process that determines the level of financial support people are entitled to when accessing Aged Care services, [the forms have been simplified](#), with more than half the questions removed from the Residential Aged Care test, more than a quarter from the Home Care test, and notes in both reduced by 70%. Some pensioners will no longer even be required to complete a form at all.

A part of the [2018-19 budget measures to reduce bureaucracy](#) and improve the complex process of access to care services, the Aged Care Forms Taskforce has been congratulated by Minister Ken Wyatt on the success of the work and the benefits it will pass on to the community.

MULTICULTURAL CARE

The Government is [funding a new training program for nurses](#), providing \$300,000 for the development of a new Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) training framework. To be developed by the [Migrant and Refugee Women's Health Partnership](#), the framework will support Aged Care and Health nurses to care for those people who come from a migrant, refugee or non-English speaking background. The resources will be available to nursing students and currently practising nurses.

ANZAC DAY

April of course saw ANZAC day being commemorated across Australia, as well as throughout many Aged Care facilities.

Facilities reflected on the day in many different ways; with a facility in Adelaide [sanding and painting their own crosses for their service](#). Across other states, some amazing stories were shared. You can read Aged Care 101's story of a [95 year old WWII veteran here](#) and watch a video of a 99 year old veterans' [reflection on war here](#).

SENSORY GARDENS & TRAILS

Two lovely stories of the power of nature and the joy they can bring people living in care and those living with dementia this month. A new, dementia-friendly sensory garden is coming together in Woookarung Regional Park in Ballarat, Victoria. The trail is a community effort; with the thought and planning that has gone into it [captured on video by Dementia Australia](#), which you can watch [here](#).

Another beautiful sensory garden is also in existence in Orange, NSW, at St Francis Aged Care. Specifically designed as an enclosed area that engages the senses, the plants and materials in the garden have been [carefully selected to stimulate sight, sound, touch and smell](#). You can read further on the garden [here](#).

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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