

# INDUSTRY UPDATE – JANUARY

FEB 24TH, 2020 | ARTICLE

We are now in the full swing of 2020. The start of the year has been an extremely trying and difficult time for many. The devastating bushfires ravaging the country has affected many Residents, Providers, team members and families in the industry. More recently, the welcome rain has led to damaging flooding, and more difficult news for the industry with the latest StewartBrown report sharing alarming numbers, with the amount of Providers operating in the red surpassing 50%. The Royal Commission may have had time off from hearings, but utilised the extra time to release more research and consider new models. Some of the biggest news for January came with the proposed changes to Aged Care Assessments and with it much debate; and a new report of the wait times for Residential Care has been released. With such a difficult time for many in the industry, January has also been a month of amazing stories of kindness, support and love. Both Residents and Providers have delivered above and beyond to communities and animals in need as a result of the bushfires, even with many being affected themselves. Let's look at what started the year in the news for the Aged Care industry.

## AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRE CRISIS

January 2020 for much of the country was a very difficult time for many, with the devastating bushfires raging across the country. [Many facilities](#) were affected, as well as team members and their families. A number of [facilities were evacuated](#), and [others were on standby to evacuate](#) for a number of weeks. In this time, a huge number of stories have emerged of amazing acts of strength, kindness and humanity by Residents and Aged Care workers and organisations. In a time of distress, homes and lives being threatened, these are some of the amazing stories that came out from our beautiful and amazing industry:

- With seven sites threatened by fire, NSW-based [IRT faced a very difficult end to 2019 and start to 2020](#). However, to support the organisation and facility evacuation team members returned early from leave; pharmacists continued to deliver medication despite one losing their own home in the fires; team members from other organisations offered their help as well as members of the community – all whilst those were continuously affected by the fires and some losing their own homes.
- Residents from Lifeview Aged Care [knit, sewed, crocheted and built many items](#) to be donated to the Animal Rescue Craft Guild, to help injured wildlife whose homes and lives have been devastated from the fires. In addition, they made hundreds 'food balls' for the wildlife, with the Director of Aged Care at Lifeview, Peter Reilly, looking for more initiatives to help.

- Another Resident from Benetas' Dalkeith Gardens facility [spent 4 hours a day herself](#), making wraps and pouches – all with rheumatoid arthritis.
- A healthcare staffing agency that put out a call for Aged Care workers to assist when the fires stopped people from getting to work, [received thousands of offers to help](#). Inundated with people wanting to help out the facilities in affected areas, the agency saw people leaving their homes at 4am to drive to buses that would take them to work, taking flights and agency staff working on the floor themselves.
- Lewington House in Omeo had some of the most difficult decisions to make – to stay or go and what would benefit the Residents the best. Between firefighters, the facility workers and the facility's pet therapy dog, a huge number of hours were worked by many to keep Residents comfortable and safe. You can [read their amazing story here](#).
- What a testament to the outstanding industry we work in, the Residents who have done so much to give back, and the communities banding together to help one another through this time.

The Minister for Aged Care [thanked Aged Care workers](#) in late January for the exceptional efforts they have put in to keep Residents safe and comfortable over this disastrous bushfire season, all whilst facing their own personal difficulties with the fires.

## ROYAL COMMISSION

The Royal Commission had a break from hearings over the December / January summer months, however continued to remain in the news with the release of two research papers in late January. Research paper 2, *Review of International Systems of Long-term Care of Older People*, and Research Paper 3, *Review of Innovative Models of Aged Care*, were released in collaboration with researchers at Flinders University, as well as a number of commercial and industry partners. The [papers explore international Aged Care systems; and approaches to Aged Care that are not widely available](#) in Australia. The studies put forward that the Aged Care models in Denmark and Sweden have [stand out systems that Australia could look to replicate](#); as well as noting that Australia's spend on Aged Care is ['embarrassing' in comparison to other countries](#). You can read a snapshot of the papers in the Australian Ageing Agenda's [wrap up here](#).

The commission also announced its [first hearing in the form of a workshop](#) for 2020, following on from its Consultation Paper released in December 2019 on program design in Aged Care. *'Redesign of the Aged Care System'* took place in Adelaide on the 10-11 February.

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](#).

## OVER 50% OF FACILITIES OPERATING AT A LOSS

To funding, and the latest StewartBrown report released in January reveals that the figures have now surpassed [50% of Providers operating at a loss](#) for the quarter ending September 2019. The report shows that the situation is much worse in regional, rural and remote areas. Aged Care peak bodies have again expressed their huge concern for the 'unstainable' sector, calling for [urgent, immediate action and a funding injection](#) to ensure that facilities can stay open. Peak body ACSA has called on the Government to take urgent action before [facilities are forced to close](#); and LASA continues to call for [an additional \\$1.3B in funding](#) to help keep them open.

[984 Aged Care homes were surveyed](#), which accounts for 40% of facilities in Australia. 65% of regional, remote and very remote reported an operating loss (negative earnings before tax); and 47% of metropolitan facilities.

The report comes in the same month as the release of the Royal Commission research papers, led by Flinders University, that highlight the [low level of spending in the Aged Care sector in Australia](#) in comparison to other countries such as Canada, the UK, Japan and Denmark.

The StewartBrown report [can be read here](#).

## CONTROVERSY OVER POTENTIAL ACAT PRIVATISATION

One of the biggest stories for the sector in January was the controversy surrounding the claims that the [Government intended to privatise the Aged Care assessment process](#), as a part of its streamlining of the Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACAT) and Regional Assessment Service. In late December 2019, the Federal Government announced that the assessment services would be streamlined into one system, a recommendation from the 2017 Tune Review, which was supported by the Royal Commission and peak bodies. However, the Government announced that the ACAT system would be going out for tender in 2020, which has resulted [in concern from state governments](#) and organisations about the [privatisation of the system](#). It was reported in [this article](#) that Aged Care Minister Richard Colbeck had the reform supported by the Royal Commission, to which Commissioner Pagone released a statement that maintains that the Royal Commission has [not endorsed the Government's position](#) in the October 2019 Interim Report. This statement was in turn acknowledge by Minister Colbeck, [refuting the claims](#) that the intention is to privatise the assessment process for Aged Care.

You can read further on the Government's changes to the Aged Care assessments, which will be implemented from April 2021, [here](#). A webinar to give stakeholders an update on the new Aged Care assessment arrangements was intended to be held in February, however has now been moved to March. You can access the webinar on 11 March 2020 [following the steps here](#).

## ASSESSMENT FORM NOW ONLINE

As a part of the Government's plan [to improve the function of the My Aged Care website](#), registering for My Aged Care and applying for an assessment, can now be done online. Previously, this process was [only able to be undertaken via a phone call](#) to the My Aged Care contact centre. The online form offers an alternative to this method and can be completed in their own time.

The online form can be [found here](#).

## GP & PHARMACIST NEWS

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) has identified the increasing number of older people they see in practice and the challenges they face when a person living in the community or Residential Care has a multi disciplinary health care team. Care can be complex, and involves a great deal of collaboration. The RACGP's '*Medical care of older persons in residential aged care facilities*', known as the 'Silver Book', a clinical resource originally developed more than 20 years ago, has recently seen it's [fifth edition underway for a substantial update](#). Retitled *RACGP aged care clinical guide (Silver Book)*, the fifth edition will be released only online, to ensure updated information can be easily maintained and accessible. Part A was released in October 2019; [Part B in in January 2020](#); and Part C to come in mid-to-late 2020. The release of Part B has been a crucial moment in fighting elder abuse, with the guidelines [urging GPs to look out for, and report signs of elder abuse](#), and [issues relating to the care of LGBT people](#). The *Silver Book* [can be found here](#).

To Pharmacist news, and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PAS) has made its submission to the Government, including five recommendations, for the 2020-21 Federal Budget. Aiming to improve the wellbeing of patients, particularly those living in Aged Care, the PSA submission highlights the need to [fully utilise the expertise of Pharmacists](#) in Australia. Funding would be used to create support and resources for Pharmacists working in Aged Care, with the establishment of a 'Medicine Safety in Aged Care Resources and Support program; as well as investment in supporting rural and remote Pharmacists with a 'Rural Pharmacy Enhanced Services Program'. You can view the [five recommendations here](#), and the [full submission here](#).

## AUSTRALIA DAY MEDALS

January saw the Australia Day honours released, and among those recognised for their services to Australians and the country, were some exceptional people who were honoured for their work with Aged Care and older people. CEO of the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN), [Craig Gear](#), was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia, for his service to the welfare of older people and seniors' rights; [Colleen Mandicos](#), who focuses her work on ageing migrant populations and assisting migrants through the ageing process, also received an OAM; and [Colin Mann](#) was another OAM recipient for his

work in aged welfare, including ensuring that his regional town of Tenterfield had access to hostel and nursing home care so that older people were able to remain in the town amongst family and friends.

It is an honour to work in the same industry as these people, [amongst a number of other exceptional persons contributing to Aged Care](#) in Australia positively.

The full list of Australia Day 2020 recipients can be [found here](#).

## WAIT TIMES FOR RESIDENTIAL CARE

The release of the Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services 2020* has shown that wait times for older people who have been approved for Aged Care, prior to their entry into Residential Aged Care, [is on the rise](#). For the 2018-19 period, the average wait time from ACAT approval to entry into care was 152 days (five months), which was [an increase from 121 days in 2017-18](#). However, the report also showed that occupancy has also fallen below 90%, a 10 year low. As an ACAT assesses older people for both Residential and Home Care, Ian Yates, CEO of COTA, [suggests that many people wish to stay in their homes](#) and wait for a Home Care package; and that current media surrounding the Aged Care industry could be affecting families decisions of putting their older family members into care. These sentiments were echoed by StewartBrown partner, David Sinclair, in reference to the [drop in occupancy levels](#) shown in the latest StewartBrown report. The *Report on Government Services 2020* can be [found here](#).

## DEMENTIA NEWS

January saw the release of the Government's [Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Mission Roadmap for public consultation](#), for one month, closing on the 18th February 2020. The \$185M Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Mission is a medical research package that aims to focus on dementia, ageing and Aged Care, funding research to support older Australians to maintain health and quality of life. The public consultation intended to assist with prioritising critical funding. You can [view the draft Roadmap here](#) or [read more on the Mission here](#).

Intergenerational programs have been big news in the industry for some time now, but some new research by Griffith University has shown just how important and beneficial they are to [potentially delay the onset of dementia](#). Mixed Aged Care models, such as the one shown in the extremely popular ABC program 'Old people's home for 4 year olds' were studied by Griffith University's [Intergenerational Care Project](#), finding that the benefits went both ways. Just 2 hours of interaction a week boosted the mood of older people, decreased loneliness and is linked to a decrease in cognitive decline. Children also benefited with improved confidence and wellbeing. You can [read more on the study here](#).

## TECHNOLOGY & RESEARCH

To technology and research for the start of 2020, and a lot happening in this space as always. Here is a wrap-up of all things innovation in the Aged Care industry!

- The 2020 Consumer Electronics Show (CES) held in Las Vegas was reported to have a [prominent focus on solutions for older people](#) to maintain health and quality of life. From 'smart pyjamas' that monitor health vitals, to intelligent homes that allow people to live independently whilst being monitored for disease or health issues to robots as companions – the CES showcased a great deal of upcoming technology in the Aged Care space.
- A CES 2020 Innovation Awards Honoree, [CarePredict](#), is a new wearable technology for older people. The [innovation builds on the data that fitness trackers and smart watches](#) capture, but enhanced by monitoring activities of daily living, such as bathroom use patterns, eating, sleeping and walking. Artificial Intelligence (AI) learns 'normal' patterns of activity and can alert family and friends if anything is out of place – such as meals being skipped or sleeping is restless.
- Australian-base [InteliCare](#) has raised a second round of funding successfully in late 2019, and continues to work on their [personalised approach to Aged Care with affordable sensors](#) that enable older people to remain more independent – whether in the home, retirement village or Aged Care facility.
- Singapore-based startup, [Homage](#), which is an on-demand caregiving service, has also raised another successful round of funding to continue delivering holistic, personalised care through its platform. Intending to expand across the Asia-Pacific, the platform aims to [enable wellness and recovery](#) by creating a network of reliable and trusted care professionals
- To another start-up: based in the US, [Dwell at Home](#) is an app designed to match people who need care with caregivers. The care provided can be from consistent care seven days a week; to a conversation or errands. Withing a few weeks of launching, [the app had more than 70 caregivers listed](#) in the app's hometown area of Birmingham, Alabama.
- [HomeStay Care](#) has [won a tender to upgrade technology at nine South Australian facilities](#) belonging to Aged Care & Housing Group Inc (ACH Group). The assistive technology is the Essence Smart Care Call platform, comprising of voice-activated call stations, that allows two-way calls. The tech also has activity sensors to [monitor routines and detect anomalies](#).
- Not-for-profit Aged Care Provider Benetas has developed their own online tool, to help older Australians screen their physical health to detect and take proactive steps to reduce frailty. [PAT \(Positive Ageing Tool\)](#), asks five questions that can help indicate risk of serious health decline, then [offers advice to address any issues](#).
- Continuing on the theme of slowing and even reversing frailty, [a new program is being trialled in Australia](#), adapted from a successful program in Singapore. 'Be Your Best' is being co-designed by Bolton Clarke Research Institute and hospitals Cabrini Health, Alfred Health and Monash Health intending to help clients returning from hospital so there is no decline in health, which is a big risk.

- A [new eHealth record initiative has been launched](#) by Australian Digital Health Agency and aged care medication management specialists Webstercare, intending to improve the management of medications and reduce errors. The [Pharmacist Shared Medicines List \(PSML\)](#) consolidates prescription and non-prescription medicines, then uploaded to an individual's My Health Record to assist Aged Care and health care Providers to make informed decisions when prescribing.
- Intergenerational environments are [the focus of a new project](#) that has secured over \$1M in research funding. Looking at how both primary and secondary schools can be integrated with retirement and Residential Aged Care living environments, the project will be undertaken by Fulton Trotter Architects, Queensland University of Technology, Australian Catholic University and Deakin University. The project will explore how integrating these environments can improve health, increase social inclusion and improve the use of existing infrastructure.

## NEW STANDARDS

The new Aged Care Quality Standards, that came into effect on 1 July 2020, have reportedly impacted the financial situation for facilities in the far north of Queensland. The cost of ensuring the new standards are met has meant for Pyramid Residential Care Centre (PRCC) has meant there are [grave concerns for the facility's future](#) if funding is not made available. The ['new regulations have moved the goalposts'](#) and the facility is 'desperately struggling to be compliant', PRCC Chairman, Paul Gregory, has shared. The Cairns Post article which shared PRCC's concerns, also states that an estimated that seven facilities in the Far North region of Queensland were in a similar situation.

In other news for the standards, the Aged Care Quality & Safety Commission has developed a series of resources in the form of storyboards, to [assist those in rural and remote regions interacting with Aged Care](#) (including the Aged Care workforce, Aged Care recipients and their families). The storyboard resources aim to illustrate scenarios of how the standards apply, within a rural and remote context. A User Guide for the storyboards is also available. You can [access the resources here](#).

## GOOD NEWS

Viral videos have often changed the lives of the people in them, and [this video](#) is no exception. The video (that is a must-see!) is of Margaret Mackie, an 83 year old woman living with dementia in Scotland, singing a duet with her carer. The viral video's success led to the carer, a musician himself, taking Margaret to a recording studio and [releasing a single of Frank Sinatra's 'My Way'](#). Margaret's daughter has shared that this experience has given her Mum a ['new lease of life'](#). The single can be [downloaded from iTunes here](#), with all of the proceeds going to Alzheimer's Society and Dementia UK.

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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