

Submission for the Australian Government Aged Care Approvals
Round, February 27th 2007.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the aged care planning process for 2007.

Background

The Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) has an interest in community and residential aged care services, with a particular focus on the needs of low-income and disadvantaged elderly. Our interest is principally due to our long term involvement in the Home and Community Care (HACC) consumer consultation project. TasCOSS has conducted consultation with HACC eligible consumers since 2001 on a variety of issues and the findings have been collated into research reports. A full copy of the 2006 report, *Finding Ways to Stay at Home*, is available from our web site, www.tascoss.org.au.

Many HACC consumers move between HACC and Aged Care funded services, such as respite beds, CACPs and EACH packages. Thus the findings from past consultation rounds have formed the basis for this submission. In addition, the experiences of a number of TasCOSS member organisations and individuals who work in the aged care community sector have also been sought and contribute to this submission.

Because our contact with the aged care sector is principally research and consultation based, we are unable to provide feedback using the questionnaire provided. Instead we have chosen to address each of the areas identified in the cover letter. We trust that this provides a useful framework from which you can incorporate our input.

Addressing the areas of interest.

1. The level of demand for supply of aged care and possible options to meet the need now and in the future

TasCOSS members indicate a need for increased numbers of CACP and EACH packages to enable improved service delivery to clients still living at home whose needs have exceeded the resources of HACC funded services. Members report that they are finding it increasingly difficult to provide adequate levels of care from their HACC resources, and have insufficient CACP and EACH packages to access.

The demand for residential aged care may be reduced by better access to information about community based aged care services. The TasCOSS HACC consumer consultation project report, 2006, states that a lack of access to information about community based

services can result in an inappropriate referral to ACAT for placement into residential care (p37). Consumers told stories of being pushed into residential Aged Care by GPs and hospital staff, who had no knowledge of HACC or community aged care services.

Aged care services need to be affordable for low-income ageing Tasmanians. The TasCOSS HACC consumer consultation project report, 2006, identified a fear amongst HACC eligible pensioners that services provided by private operators would be unaffordable (p76). The report suggests that the increase of privately owned, for-profit community aged care service providers raises issues about accessibility for disadvantaged elderly Tasmanians (78). In particular, it states that in the interest of equity, those who can not afford user-pays services are still entitled to high quality services.

2. Identifying the gaps in service delivery

TasCOSS members have indicated that in the Break O'Day area in particular there are gaps in service delivery. This area is also identified as a high need area, due to substantial levels of social disadvantage. Members also report a gap between the types of services available to HACC and CACP clients. That is, clients who will benefit from the increased services of the package may also be disadvantaged because they are then excluded from accessing basic HACC services such as spring cleaning or home modification.

There is an unmet need for in-home respite services amongst the Tasmanian population. Participants in past HACC consultations have spoken about their frustration at not being able to secure appropriate respite care for the elderly, resulting in an increase in carer stress and isolation.

There is a decreased uptake of aged care services by culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Tasmanian communities. The HACC report 2005 consulted with a range of CALD communities and concluded that CALD people encounter language and cultural barriers within aged care services and recommend an increase in cross-cultural training for service providers and for an increase in the availability of ethno-specific services (p19-20).

3. Clarifying the relationship between services provided and the effect this may have on service delivery

The interaction between the range of community based and residential aged care services is largely uncoordinated and this contributes to a general confusion in the community about the availability and applicability of aged care services. Participants in the 2006 HACC consumer consultation project reported that the aged care system was so confusing that they did not know where or how to start accessing help (p28). Many participants stated it was

not until they were hospitalised and someone organised services, as part of a discharge plan, that they were able to access assistance (p23). The report recommends that increased resources are required to better coordinate care between services and that more research into the gaps and overlaps in service delivery is required.

4. Prioritising the level and location of additional aged care places

There is a need for respite beds, low and high care, across the state. Participants in past HACC consultations have spoken about their frustration at not being able to secure appropriate respite care for the elderly, and of long waits for respite care, resulting in an increase in carer stress and isolation (2006, 65).

Conclusion

An increase in aged care beds and packages needs to be coupled with improvements in the coordination of community aged care services. TasCOSS is keen to see an increase in quality public community and residential aged care services, in particular, services that readily meet the needs of the most socially and financially disadvantaged aged care members of the community. If you would like to talk further on these issues we are happy to meet with you.

Mat Rowell
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