

Report from the National Aged Care Alliance meeting held on 6-7th February, 2014.

Day 1:

Congratulations flowed to Pat Sparrow on her well deserved appointment to the position of Aged Care Advisor to the Minister of Health and Disabilities, Minister Fifield.

The Minister has formed a new committee and has invited representatives to sit on this committee in an advisory capacity.

Health Workforce Australia:

Mr Etienne Scheepers, Executive Director, Workforce Innovation and Reform, spoke about the challenges of bringing reform to the healthcare workforce. Health Workforce Australia was formed via COAG in 2010, and has its base in Adelaide. It was given set tasks to achieve around the National Partnership Agreement. The Workforce Skills Industry report identified the need for 40000 workers to be trained annually and at present we have approximately 20000 being trained. A report is being formulated for discussion which will hopefully be available around mid March.

Reforms attract negative comment regarding the implementation even though the perceived barriers do not actually exist in most circumstances.

There are reviews in place to determine the enablers and barriers to reforms.

An example given was about a nurse working in the Albury/ Wodonga area who is able to perform a certain range of duties on one side of the border but not the other.

Existing cultures and customs determine the service provided, change is very hard to promote.

Time was spent preparing questions to address to Minister Fifield for clarification.

One was around the future funding of the Carer Respite Centres and National Respite for Carers Program funding which is due to run out 30/06/14.

The Minister stated that discussions were happening now and within the next week or so a decision would be made.

Some concern was felt re Aged Care now coming under the Dept of Social Services rather than the Dept of Health and Aging. Minister Fifield assured us that older persons health concerns should not be overlooked and strategies would be implemented to underpin this.

The Minister was asked about possible interface opportunities between the Aged Care Sector and The National Disability Insurance Scheme. He stated he had an open mind around possible interface. He felt it was important to learn from trials and assessments from both areas around existing supports and interface with other departments. Once it is determined what is working well, then look at what might be done better. The area of workforce is one where an overlap already exists.

NACA Day 2:

Representatives from the Dept. of Social Services, formerly from Dept. of Health and Aging attended in the morning to answer questions regarding the progress of the reforms.

The main theme was around the change in Government and how the new Minister and Department Staff are handling the changes. Time frames of the proposed changes are the most likely differences and some timelines have been pushed out. Communication strategies were also discussed as there are a lot of changes that the public need to be aware of and advertising via leaflets, various media outlets and road shows will be the main vehicles used.

Recognition has been given to the wide variation of work within the HACC system and the complexity of finalizing a contracting model that captures all the good work being done. It is hoped that a discussion paper can be created for all HACC providers to have input and a final Program Framework intended for the middle of the year.

Susan Ryan, the Age Discrimination Commissioner gave an overview of her work. It was a fascinating insight into the world of human rights advocacy and the work being done to ensure older Australians can age appropriately. Those attending the meeting asked for a copy of her speech to be placed on the NACA site. On the 27th April, the Commissioner is addressing the National Press Club. She also encouraged people to share 'good news stories' on the Aged Positive Website. She finished by sharing that in Japan and China the term was not 'old age' but 'long life' which we all felt had a much more positive feel to it.