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## Action on complaints

The Federal Minister for Ageing, Senator Santo Santoro, will take a submission to Federal Cabinet outlining measures to help eliminate the abuse of the elderly within Australia's aged care facilities.

"I have been invited by the Prime Minister to go to Cabinet as soon as possible with a submission in relation to the issue, and provide recommendations as to how the abuse of elderly people within our aged care facilities can be prevented," Senator Santoro said.

In making the announcement, Senator Santoro expressed his appreciation for the advice he received from members of the Ministerial Aged Care Advisory Committee (ACAC). The CEO of the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Ltd, Mr Mark Brandon is a member of the ACAC.

"In fact I have been very encouraged by the support within the industry for measures which will help prevent the rare instances of sexual abuse which have been the subject of recent public concern," Senator Santoro said.

"It is my intention to now immediately write to my state colleagues asking them to meet with me and to give me their views as to how we can move forward with some of the important suggestions that have been put to me by the stakeholders.

"This is an essential step in the implementation of improvements to the safety aspects of our aged care system. Many of the suggestions for reform cannot be implemented by the Commonwealth Government without the support of State Governments.

*Cont'd p.2*



## Residents rally around baton relay

Residents at Rowena Nursing Home in Heidelberg, Victoria, have had great fun and activities in anticipation of the Commonwealth Baton Relay passing their home. The baton passed on 14 March, and the residents lined the footpath

cheering and waving their specially made flags. Many remembered the 1956 Olympics, especially as the '56 Olympic Village is in the area, and have had a lovely time reminiscing.

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The members of the Advisory Committee expressed general support for the following initiatives:

- A uniform system of police checks for workers in the aged care industry
- An increase in unannounced visits for aged care facilities
- A review of the current Complaints Resolution Scheme
- Enhanced training for all aged care staff in relation to knowledge and awareness of abuse of the elderly and how to deal with complaints.

“On the issue of mandatory reporting, the membership of the committee was significantly divided. Some members of the committee requested additional research and information in relation to the effectiveness of mandatory reporting schemes in overseas jurisdictions.”

Senator Santoro thanked stakeholders in the aged care sector for the positive and enthusiastic way they had engaged in the consultation process on the abuse issue.

“I have received many submissions from carers, relatives, advocacy groups, providers and other professionals within the aged care industry. I have also spoken with a number of residents.

“I reiterate my belief that the vast majority of aged care facilities within Australia are safe places for our elderly citizens to live in.

“They are run by dedicated and compassionate individuals who regard their duty of care towards the elderly as sacrosanct.

“I have the highest of regard for this group of professionals who dedicate their lives to looking after those who need their care.”

## Just a word...

We read much these days about corporate governance. Much of it has been prompted by the collapse or scandals surrounding major corporations once trusted and household names. Reading these reports, you can't help but wonder: where was the Board?

Governance is also an issue for approved providers and their senior managers. The aged care industry has made significant advances – with billions of dollars in assistance from the taxpayers along the way – in the provision of quality care for residents.

But has reporting and governance kept pace? Let's consider audit and accreditation reports.

How many are forwarded to the CEO? How many CEOs report to their board on continuous improvement?



As CEOs, our Boards can often be our final 'quality assurance' check. But are Boards active in this area? Are Boards properly informed, and do Directors have the necessary skills and experience to fulfill their obligations and carry out their duties?

Perhaps this could be a matter for 'general business' at the next Board meeting.



## Residents clean up



John Houston with his artwork

John Houston has been a resident at Shoreham Aged Care Facility for six years. Due to a severe cardiovascular accident, John can only use one arm and has speech difficulties. Staff and residents find him a true gentleman and character in his 80th year.

After moving into the home, John was keen to try something new and accidentally discovered a

talent for sketching. John sketched local scenery late last year, which the home had reproduced on tea towels. These were then sold to families of residents, with 50 being sold during the week before Christmas.

Responding to high demand, John has just finished his sketch for the second tea towel, this one being of the local Shoreham School House.

Profits from the sale of the \$4 tea towels go to the Friends of Shoreham Relatives & Volunteer group. The group decides with the residents what they would like to spend the money on, including things like entertainment and singers.

The local general store now displays John's work and the community can purchase tea towels. They have even made their way to New Zealand to John's family.

# Profile: Keitha Griggs



Keitha Griggs and resident Helen Kanaris

## Job title

Registered Nurse Division 2 at Surrey Hills Private Nursing Home, Victoria.

## Describe your job

I have held a diverse range of roles at Surrey Hills but now I have responsibilities in direct care of residents. I also oversee the continence program and I manage the assessments for the RCS documentation. I work closely with the DON and am responsible for staff allocation.

I am also a member of the Quality Management Committee, where I am responsible for auditing and implementing quality initiatives.

## Challenges of the job

My biggest challenge is coordinating and allocating adequate time to all the varied aspects of my position. Night duty is also a challenge.

## Highlights of the job

The major highlight of my job is seeing the enjoyment on some of the residents' faces when they recognise me as their carer, call out my name, or ask me to visit them.

Others are:

- Friendships I made over the years with residents and the wonderful staff at the facility.
- The opportunity I have been given by my employer to expand

my knowledge and skills in a variety of positions, including my extensive involvement in quality management and achieving three year accreditation for the facility.

- Being honoured by TENA in 2005 for the inaugural 2005 Honour Roll for exceptional nurse in aged care management.

## What do you look forward to?

I look forward to completing my medication administration course.

I look forward to being involved in special occasions being held by the facility for residents to enjoy.

## Your biggest buzz

My biggest buzz is diet coke.

My most recent buzz was a surprise birthday party held for one of our residents, Norman, which was organised by night staff. The expression on his face and his enjoyment were priceless.

My everlasting buzz was when a resident's husband read out the condolence card I sent him at his wife's funeral.

## Who or what inspires you?

The nursing staff and carers at Surrey Hills who care for the residents, who show care and compassion day in day out, and go out of their way to make a resident's day enjoyable.

## The Standard survey – your response

For many, *The Standard* is required reading, readership survey responses show so far. Most or all of the articles are read and people find that *The Standard* provides them with relevant information about the Agency and

accreditation, and makes practical suggestions to help people in their work. *The Standard*, along with the website and discussions with assessors is how most people find information about the Agency and accreditation.

A number of people asked for an article on practical examples of what assessors consider when carrying out accreditation audits. This is a great idea and this edition includes an article to meet this demand. Further articles based on suggestions by readers will be included in future editions.

## Better Practice Awards Better Practice Awards Better Practice Awards Better Practice

## Literati - Ilumba Gardens, NSW



This home, operated by the Frank Whiddon Masonic Homes of NSW, established a literary group because one of their residents, the late Mrs Edna Johnson, was having difficulty attending her university literature course. Her university lecturer, Margaret Linton, now reads to the group each week, and residents contribute their own poetry. Three books of poetry have been

produced by the group. Feedback resulted in a microphone and magnifying covers to assist residents with hearing and visual deficits. The group shares the two fundamental principles with the University of the Third Age which are to emphasise learning for the love of it and to learn in a friendly and supportive social environment.

The **Better Practice in Aged Care Awards** are presented for better practice in any program run by a home, that benefits the lives of the residents.

Nominations for an award are made at the same time as reapplying for accreditation and are a means of promoting positive results for residents in the aged care industry.

More information on **Better Practice Award** winning programs can be found at [www.accreditation.org.au](http://www.accreditation.org.au).

For more information on how to apply for a **Better Practice in Aged Care Award**, please contact Jennie Day, Better Practice Awards Coordinator, 02 9633 1711 by email [jennie.day@accreditation.org.au](mailto:jennie.day@accreditation.org.au), or visit the Agency's website.

## Assessor education benefiting residents

As part of our program to ensure the quality of assessment, the Agency has developed a series of Quality Assessor Information and Training (QAIT) sessions. These are available to both Agency employees and contract assessors. The first of the QAIT sessions was held around the country during February and March. The focus of the session was Standard Three, Resident Lifestyle, and had an emphasis on Cultural and Spiritual Life. The sessions proved extremely popular, with some sessions enjoying an attendance of more than 70% of assessors registered in those states.



*Participants at the NSW QAIT session*

Feedback from the sessions has been very positive with assessors commenting about the reinforcement and expansion of knowledge centred around cultural issues in particular. Assessors also enjoyed the opportunity to gain more information on Agency processes, and to network with each other.

The next session is due to be held around the country in April. The topic is *Interviewing Residents* and is focused on maximising value from interviews with residents and their relatives. Information on the locations and dates of the sessions is available on our website at <http://www.accreditation.org.au/ForAssessorsQAIT>.

For further information, please contact the education coordinator in one of our offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth or Adelaide.

# Accreditation guide

Some see accreditation as a daunting experience, even before the assessors set foot on site. But the **Agency's Accreditation Manager, Bridget Paul**, says that approved providers and staff should see it as an opportunity to showcase their facility.

Accredited homes have regular contact from the Agency, but even in between those contacts homes can do a lot to ensure they meet the Standards. Under both the *Accreditation Grant Principles 1999* and the Accreditation Standards, homes are required to pursue continuous improvement and to continuously comply with the Standards. Therefore, a sound monitoring program, aimed at identifying and resolving issues in your home, and of course finding better ways of doing things is essential. This also means that homes should continue the momentum even after the assessors have left site, continually improving their services and care to residents.

Many homes start preparing their application for accreditation well in advance to ensure it is a true reflection of the home's performance. Use of the Agency's *Results and Processes* document as a final check on systems, can often mean last minute issues are identified and addressed. When the application is completed by a team of staff, it also means staff become involved in accreditation well before the audit, and are therefore better placed to understand and explain the home's systems, and prevent "program collapse" when one person goes on leave, or becomes unavailable. It also ensures the stress and pressure on one person

is reduced, and the team building fosters a sense of enthusiasm, rather than nerves.

During the visit, one of the ways staff can be involved is to know their role and how it relates overall to the Accreditation Standards. It is also important to remember that one expected outcome does not "belong" to one staff member, but that all staff members are involved in ensuring that residents receive a high standard of care and services. Therefore, if staff identify issues in a home, they should initiate an improvement. The more a staff member participates in improving the home, the more they understand how the home's overall systems relate to them, and therefore the easier they find answering questions during the visit.

Staff shouldn't be concerned about speaking to assessors. By and large, assessors ask simple questions relating to staff members' specific roles and are not there to catch staff out. Assessors want to know how

things work within the home and how staff know about what they need to do to provide care and services that meet the needs and preferences of residents. Staff are also the experts within the home and assessors want them to share their valuable information to demonstrate the home complies with the Standards.

The most important thing to remember when being assessed is that the Agency and homes want the same thing: we want to work to continually improve care and services for residents and to promote innovation and best practice. So during your Accreditation audit, see it as an opportunity to showcase your results to the Agency. We want to know all of the positive initiatives taking place in the industry, so if you think one of your programs is a good example of this, do submit a nomination for a Better Practice in Aged Care Award.

Information on the Better Practice in Aged Care Awards, *Results and Processes* and Accreditation factsheets are available on the Agency website [www.accreditation.org.au](http://www.accreditation.org.au).

**L** Accreditation we've got for another three years  
**i** And this time Lesley shed some more tears  
**v** Eileen was happily jumping around  
**i** There was plenty of happy faces to be found  
**n** The staff are all caring and happy for us  
**g** They do all their chores without any fuss  
**C** VIPs from Sydney asked many things  
**a** So we told them truthfully we live like kings  
**r** No cooking – no cleaning – no household chores  
**e** No washing – no ironing and no scrubbing floors  
 We get lots of outings and play games galore  
 But it's so much fun, I'd like some more  
 So to Living Care, Hooray! Hooray!  
 We'll all live happily day after day.

*Written by Doreen Hodges,  
resident Clelland Lodge, Living Care*

# Snakes alive!



Brian Green holds a snake

The Mews Aged Care Facility in the leafy suburb of Camberwell, Victoria, is a 60 bed facility for high-care residents. The home's lifestyle department organised a visit from snakes and lizards as part of its program of activities for residents.

Residents of The Mews were thrilled with the very friendly animals which they were able to hold, stroke and cuddle. The facilitators of the visit, Chris Grady, Diversional Therapist, and Pat Gunn, Director of Carrington Aged Care, made sure residents felt at

ease with the animals, whilst all staff and visitors were also able to hold the reptiles.

Blue tongue lizards, frogs and a turtle were held initially in order to prepare the residents for the big show of the snakes. These ranged from pythons to some of the most poisonous snakes such as brown, copperhead and tiger, all of which were held by residents.

Families of residents were very supportive of the initiative and were pleased that they were able to take part in such an unusual activity.

## Better 2006 Practice

Adelaide  
25-26 May 2006

Hobart  
29-30 June 2006

Brisbane  
13-14 July 2006

Sydney  
24-25 August 2006

Perth  
19-20 October 2006

Melbourne  
23-24 November 2006



The Better Practice events are just around the corner with the first one being held at the Stamford Grand Adelaide in Glenelg, 25-26 May 2006. The program is shaping up to be very exciting with the registration brochure due for release shortly.

To ensure you receive your copy of the registration brochure for **ANY** of our upcoming Better Practice events, visit

[www.accreditation.org.au](http://www.accreditation.org.au), complete the on-line expression of interest form and you will be added to our mailing list. By including your e-mail address, you will also receive our e-mail updates.

It's still not too late to submit an abstract if you are interested in speaking at our Perth or Melbourne events. Just visit the website for more details.