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Accreditation: What's new?

By Ross Bushrod,
General Manager Accreditation

The Agency is gearing up for one of our busiest times. More than 2300 homes are expected to apply for a further period of accreditation in 2005/2006. And we've made some changes to the accreditation process.

The Agency has reviewed the effectiveness of the previous round of accreditation and we have learned some valuable lessons.

The results of an independent report were very positive. Responses to questions relating to self-assessment, the site audit process, exit interview, site audit report and overall satisfaction reported between 92%-96% satisfaction (either satisfied or very satisfied).

While the feedback was positive, we also received suggestions and requests that we have taken into consideration in improving the process. These comments mainly referred to making the application clearer and easier to follow. Constructive comments included a desire for a clearer

direction about what is required in the form, particularly the self-assessment, removing duplication and reducing the effort required to complete the self-assessment report.

The application form

Feedback from approved providers and members of the industry has helped us review and develop a new application form, to be released shortly.

Sixteen homes were involved in testing the new application form. We thank these homes for their valuable assistance.

Every approved provider and contact at aged care homes will receive information about the new application, how it can be used and how it should be accessed via the Agency's website.

Homes are encouraged to submit their application and accompanying documents electronically. The new form is 'networkable', which means approved providers with multiple homes are able to use a network to manage applications across all services.

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Applying for accreditation is all about homes demonstrating how well they perform against the standards.

Remember an important step of accreditation is the self-assessment

report. This is your opportunity to show us that you are performing well against all the standards.

Don't underestimate the importance of telling us what you are achieving for your residents, both in the self-assessment report and during your site audit. Applications for accreditation that do not contain information that indicates compliance with the standards will be followed up with approved providers before a decision is made whether or not to continue with the application. This is part of the desk audit process set out in the *Accreditation Grant Principles 1999*.

FRONT COVER:
104 year old Giovanni
Gervasi from Tappenier
Court, Kensington, SA.

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Just a word... When are homes at risk ?

As I visit homes and meet with providers, I am often asked what are the key factors, or risks, which, in our experience, may lead to a significant change in a home's compliance with the standards.

Whenever a home's compliance with the Accreditation Standards changes significantly over a short period of time, we review previous and current audit reports and other available information to identify factors that may have caused the change.

In the relatively small number that have had significant changes it appears the following factors may be significant:

- Loss of key personnel (sometimes more than one in a short period)

- Quick growth in resident numbers
- Change in resident mix and therefore care needs at the home
- A move to new premises or changes to the premises
- Industrial action
- Reduced attention to monitoring performance, assessment and planning in relation to changing care needs (direct care given priority over managing care)
- Restructuring
- Changes in processes/ procedures not supported by robust staff training.

While some of these may be obvious "risk" factors, it is worthwhile highlighting them so managers can ensure back-up or



contingency plans are in place to prevent any effect on the quality of care. These days all successful organisations have back up business plans. We recently tested our business continuity plan.

I hope the management of aged care homes would also have such plans.

Mark Brandon
Chief Executive Officer



implemented between one and five good ideas.

The first event will be held in Adelaide on 19 and 20 May. Speakers will cover topics ranging from positive ageing, to changing the culture, to the success of managing volunteers, as well as managing challenging behaviours. Case studies will be provided which demonstrate better ways to manage medication and the interface with other acute and community carers. Speakers will help explain their own experiences of establishing a "men's shed", a practical solution to "weeding out the generation gap" and sexuality and dementia.

"The Agency is keen to provide the opportunity for those who

have tried new ways of doing things to share with others," the CEO Mark Brandon said. "This is just one way we can help reinforce and raise the standards of care and at the same time demonstrate to the community and future residents that there have been major changes for the better in Australian aged care homes."

Other events will be held in Tasmania (17 June); New South Wales (21 and 22 July); Queensland (29 and 30 September) and Western Australia (10 and 11 November).

See the website www.accreditation.aust.com for more details and deadlines for the call for papers.

One of the main goals of this year's Better Practice events will be to provide more practical ideas to improve the quality of care in aged care homes.

This follows a survey of delegates who attended last year's six events where 98% rated the event as a "very valuable learning experience" and 88% of those surveyed said they had

Accreditation: What's new (cont'd from page 1)

If you have started filling out the previous form for your upcoming accreditation, we will be able to accept either version of the application form until 31 December 2005. If further information is required, the Agency will contact you and make arrangements to receive it.

How is the new form different?

If you completed an accreditation application form in the past, you will find that the new form looks and works in a similar way to the previous form. But you will also notice that it is simpler, more flexible and has more information to help you fill it in.

There are fewer questions and less repetition. The form also includes 'self-assessment prompts' – examples of the types of information you can refer to in demonstrating your performance in a certain standard or expected outcome. This is aimed to guide you in your responses but is by no means prescriptive.

Continuous improvement

The Agency is particularly interested in looking at how your home is improving its performance against the standards, and better providing for residents' needs.

The new application form provides for a more cohesive response about continuous improvement across all of the standards. It requires information on continuous improvement to be entered in only one section instead of four as in the old form. This provides better scope for approved providers to describe the improvements made since their last accreditation audit and to outline the key improvements planned for the future. The real



General Manager Accreditation,
Mr Ross Bushrod

measurement of continuous improvement programs is better results for residents.

Of course the technology of the new online application form means we can continue to fine tune the process based on the feedback we receive from you, the users. We will regularly review and upgrade the form, particularly the self-assessment prompts, as a means of improving the process for you. You will be notified by email of any enhancements as they're made.

Quality assessors

Considering and evaluating more than 2300 applications through the audit process will be a substantial and important undertaking.

The contribution of the many skilled registered aged care quality assessors is crucial to the Agency effectively managing the accreditation process. We will be looking for interested quality assessors to work under contract, on a casual basis or as full-time term-defined employees to augment our regular full-time workforce.

The Agency has made some changes to the assessor training program to ensure that our aged care quality assessors are better equipped to perform their role. We

have revised the competency standards required for registering quality assessors and have built them into a new training course for those wishing to become an assessor.

Criteria have been strengthened for selecting assessors by an industry panel consisting of representatives of the Agency and other stakeholder representatives.

Existing aged care quality assessors will be offered a short refresher training course to enable them to meet the revised competency standards. Successful completion of this training will be essential for work with the Agency and will satisfy part of the annual training condition of registration. It is planned to offer the upgrade programs on a business hours, weekend and evening basis.

Getting better all the time

The Standard often highlights aged care homes that are performing well and continue to improve against all the standards, many overcoming significant challenges for the benefit of their residents.

Between the first and second rounds of accreditation, 899 homes improved their compliance with the Accreditation Standards.

From time to time some homes do have problems with standards of care. The majority of homes that have some non-compliance, usually have it in only one of the expected outcomes. Of the homes that had non-compliance in the six months to 31 December 2004, 68% of them had non-compliance in only one expected outcome. Where problems are identified, they are almost always rectified quickly.

For further information, contact the Agency's national office on 02 9633 1711 or toll free on 1800 288 025.

Profile: Phil McDonald

Aged Care Quality Assessor (WA)

Age: 50

Qualifications

B.SC Health Sciences (Nursing), Post-Graduate Diploma in Health Administration, Advanced Diploma Of Nursing (NZ), Registered Nurse, Registered Mental Health Nurse, and of course, registered Aged Care Quality Assessor (Quality Society of Australasia)

Did genes, environment, destiny or accident get you here?

I think it was destiny. As a child (living in Liverpool England), I watched the cargo ships go up and down the River Mersey and always knew that one day I'd travel to where they went. And I did!

Why did you choose this area of work?

I had spent many years in a clinical role and wanted a change from the acute health sector. I'd also developed an interest in continuous improvement processes. My role as a quality assessor helps me to combine my interest in quality management with my interest in gerontology.

What do you do ?

I assess nursing homes and aged care hostels on behalf of The Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Ltd to ensure they are meeting the standards set by the Federal Government according to a list of 44 expected outcomes. I also provide education to staff at nursing homes and hostels and encourage them to review the quality of the services that they

provide, the work that they do, and to continuously pursue better practice and to set new benchmarks. Ultimately, I am working with other assessors and other bodies such as the Commonwealth Government to ensure people living in aged care homes receive a high standard of care and enjoy a comfortable lifestyle that reflects who they are and what they want to do.



Toughest part of the job?

Getting to the domestic terminal at some ungodly hour on a cold and wet winter's morning to catch a flight to one of WA's regional centres.

Most satisfying part ?

Talking to residents and relatives. I hear some wonderful stories, particularly from the veterans of WWII. It's also great when people tell you just how much fun they are having at their home.

What would you change ?

I'd like to spend less time writing reports, and more time talking to residents and staff.

How do other people see you?

A manager at a home recently told me that I'm very fair, direct, up-front, always helpful, and occasionally bloody-minded. I thought that was extremely accurate.

What are you proudest of?

The improvements to the quality of care that have occurred in nursing homes and hostels since the accreditation program commenced in 1998.

Where are you going?

My work as an assessor is always evolving and developing. I'd like to work for the Agency on a long-term basis, and hope to do more education and training for staff at nursing homes and hostels.

What you need to become an aged care quality assessor...

- Must have at least four years full-time (or equivalent part-time) experience in a professional or management position of accountability involving decision-making.
- Must be a Registered Nurse.
- Before being appointed, you first have to complete a five day course approved by the Agency.
- A history in any of the following is highly regarded: aged care, social work, audit or quality management, nursing and allied health management systems.
- Travelling to aged care homes throughout the state is part of the job. A driver's licence is essential.
- Assessors can work either as employees of the Agency, or as a contractor.
- Recruitment is conducted in 'rounds', where a group of assessors is appointed at the same time. For more information visit www.accreditation.aust.com.

Homes do well despite danger

Fire, floods, gas leaks. These are the things that prompted four separate evacuations of aged care homes around the country over the last few months.

All homes were able to evacuate residents without injury despite the seriousness of the threats. This is testament to the importance of having a well-developed evacuation plan.

Fire

Valencia Nursing Home

In 2003, Valencia Nursing Home in Carmel WA was non-compliant and faced serious risk in expected outcome 4.6, Fire Security and other Emergencies. Together with the Agency's Quality assessors David Pinnell and Phil McDonald, the home worked hard to turn this around and become compliant. Nowhere is the importance of having systems which are compliant with the Accreditation Standards more evident than when the home faced a bushfire threat in January this year.

With fire and emergency services managing major fires in the Pickering Brook and Mundaring region, the smoke became so thick on 18 January that 55 residents were required to be evacuated for their safety. The Approved Provider, Sue Stublely, sought and received assistance from local Kalamunda Shire Council which provided buses to relocate residents. Sue also gained offers of assistance from a

number of residential aged care providers, with the Hall and Prior organisation lending staff and a bus, as well as accommodating 40 low care residents. The Armadale-Kelmscott Hospital took 13 high care residents and Kelmscott Hospital looked after another two.



The emergency vest used by Westcott Lodge supervisor during emergency procedures

Paul Richards, the Agency's State Manager in WA, reports that the evacuation went so smoothly due to Sue Stublely's preparations and application of the emergency management system she established following the accreditation findings of 2003.

"It was terrific to see the immediate response from other providers, the local council and hospitals," said Mr Richards.

Westcott Lodge, Orange

Following a recent fire evacuation at Westcott Lodge in Orange

NSW, the Fire Brigade Captain wrote a letter of congratulations to all staff commending them for the manner in which residents were safely evacuated, and in particular, the use of a fire bag and the procedures followed.

The Westcott Lodge has a fire bag containing information on all the residents' special needs and colour-coded bracelets to indicate their requirements. The bag also contains an emergency vest which is worn by the first staff person identifying the emergency. This person collects the fire bag, and wearing the vest, is the recognised supervisor of the emergency procedures until emergency services arrive. The fire bag and emergency vest are used in all mock fire drills which are regularly conducted at the Lodge.

Floods and gas leak

- When a truck hit a gas main in their street, 30 residents of the Uniting Care home Moorfields Box Hill in Victoria needed to be evacuated. The evacuation went smoothly and all residents returned to their home with no ill effects.

- Residents of Eltham Lodge in Victoria were evacuated from the home in February due to rising flood water. No damage was done to the home and residents safely returned when the flood waters subsided.

Quality Tender

A Melbourne-based social and market research company, Campbell Research and Consulting, has been appointed to evaluate the impact of accreditation on the delivery of quality of care and quality of life to residents in residential aged care homes.

The tender was awarded by the Department of Health and Ageing in October, and it is expected the project will be completed by October 2006.

This follows recommendations from both the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit report, No 398, as well as the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) in May 2003 that the Agency should look at the impact of accreditation on quality of care. The project will also incorporate looking at quality of life measures.

A Technical Reference Committee will include the CEO of the Agency and representatives from the aged care industry and will be chaired by the Department.

Minister's awards for excellence

An award recognising exceptional people working in aged care, has been announced by the Minister for Ageing, Julie Bishop.

Nominations are now open for the Minister's Awards for Excellence in Aged Care 2005.

Categories in the award are:

- Training and staff development (residential and community care)
- Leadership and management

- Professional development (individual)
- Food innovation
- Resident lifestyle.

Application forms and a set of assessment criteria are available on the Department of Health and Ageing's website

www.health.gov.au or by phoning 1800 500 853.

Nominations close on Friday, 6 May 2005.

IAHSA member



The Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Ltd has become a member of the International Association of Homes and Services for the Ageing (IAHSA)

IAHSA provides an international forum for the exchange of research, information, ideas, services, products and training that benefit aged care service providers.

As at 31 December 2004

2,942 accredited homes in Australia
8 for more than three years
2,653 for three years
74 for between two and three years
123 for two years
32 for between one and two years
49 for one year
3 for less than one year

From 1 July to 31 December 2004, the Agency conducted
167 site audits
40 review audits
1,954 support contacts

Farewell Llonda

Llonda Makepeace, who left the Agency in March after more than six years, is heading off to make waves in a new direction.

She has been with the Agency since its inception in 1998, nurturing many assessors and aged care home staff through the new standards from the NSW office in her role as Assessment Manager.

With a background in nursing, education, aged care and management Llonda was well

regarded by providers and staff all over the State, with some travelling long distances to her farewell.

NSW State Manager, Lynn May said her calm demeanor and wise advice would be missed. Chairman Jim Harrowell presented a brass marine clock to Llonda on behalf of the Agency in appreciation for her commitment.

The clock, displaying tide times, will help Llonda chart her new leisure time on her cabin cruiser on Lake Macquarie.

