

From quality of care to quality of life

A new and frank paper from the Global Ageing Network details the poor state of aged care delivery in all countries and sets a vision for governments and aged care providers to shift from residential care concepts to community-based concepts through innovation and digitisation.

BY JAKE NELSON

The 80-page *Call to Governments: Ageing and Long-Term Care* paper succinctly examines the numerous challenges facing aged care – including the ageing global population, workforce shortages, government inaction, and increasing rates of dementia – and bluntly states change is required, now.

The Global Ageing Network (GAN) represents over 20,000 aged care operators. Dr. Jiri Horecky is Chair plus President of the European Ageing Network and co-author of the paper. He will be speaking via video at the LEADERS SUMMIT.



Jiri Horecky

ALL GOVERNMENTS STRUGGLING WITH CARE

The paper states that around the world: “Governments are struggling with the increasing need for support and care for the ageing Population. They are, in many cases, rethinking their responsibility for financing professional long-term care.”

“Many governments are freezing or cutting budgets for the long-term care sector... These cuts put the providers under high pressure to deliver a higher volume of care at the same level of quality with the same or fewer funds.”

AN UNFAIRLY DISTRUSTED SECTOR

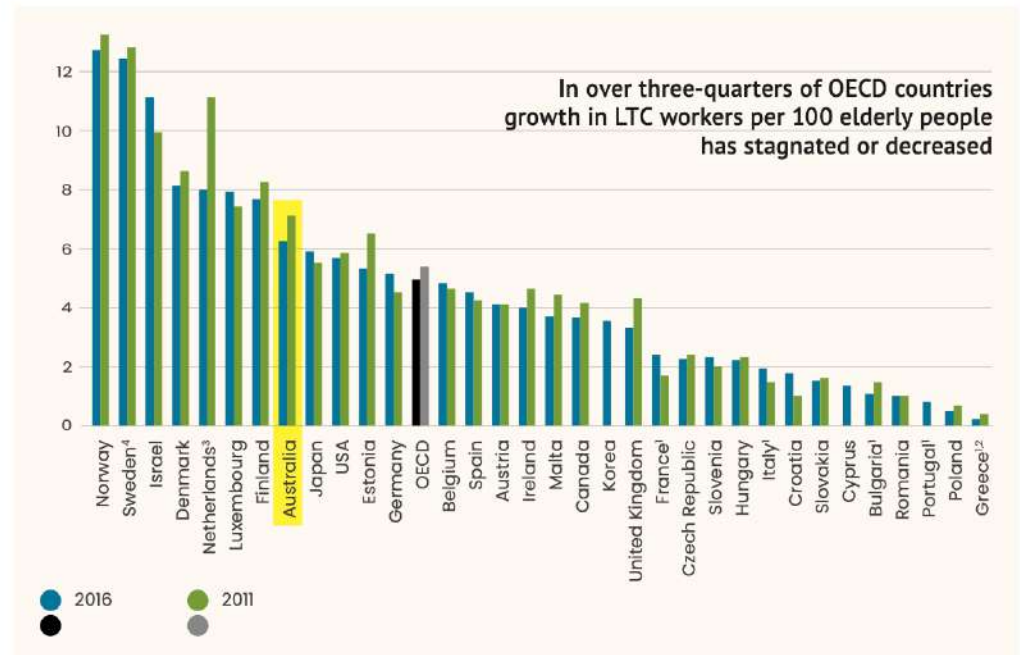
Internationally, the aged care sector has a trust and respect challenge.

“The long-term care sector is underappreciated and lacks the trust of the public and policy makers.”

“Policymakers and the media often provide a negative image, focusing on low-quality care and high costs. This unfair depiction makes the sector an unattractive place to work and impacts the family members and the older adults themselves.”

CHANGE WAYS, CHANGE POSITIONING

The authors argue that aged care needs to shift, including from a residential to a community-based model, embrace new. In the report’s preface care concepts like digitalisation, and shift its mindset



to “look at ageing care as a way to positively support living”.

“To live longer but high-quality lives, with dignity, respect, self-determination, and independence – and to enable this life for all older adults – we must change our long-term care systems. We are at a crossroads,” they say.

“As the ageing population grows, there are too many challenges to keep doing things the way we have been doing them in the past decades.”

TIME TO DE-INSTITUTIONALISE

According to the report, too much emphasis is currently placed on the technical quality of care,

and not enough on the way it is provided or how it impacts on a recipient’s quality of life.

While the GAN believes that the concept of residential care homes, where 24/7 care and assistance is provided with the activities of daily living, will still be needed in future, the network argues that care like this doesn’t need to happen in an institutional setting: for example, it could take place through home care services in apartments, with individualised services co-created with the clients and their families to make sure needed care is delivered without the older person disappearing into a closed system.

“The medical model is still dominant in long-term care. As a result, the care approach may give less emphasis on the social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of care. A social and service approach built around quality of life should be dominant, without denying that medical care plays an important role when the client has health challenges,” the report reads.

“Governments must incentivize individuals and providers to adopt technologies that will, ultimately, save health care dollars, improve quality of life, and foster efficiencies in care and service delivery.”

“Most older people live in an institutional setting because of social problems. As an example, dementia is caused by a disease, but in this stage of life, no 24-hour medical care is needed. Palliative care needs also to refocus toward quality of life. It seems contradictory, but the quality of life also includes the quality of dying.”

NEW MODELS OF FUNDING

Funding sustainability is another issue the GAN identifies, with the state of Australia’s system – where 64% of homes operated at a loss in 2020 – particularly called out as in need of a secure and sustainable source of income.

The report’s authors believe that government contributions to aged care around the world will decline as time marches on, with increasing adoption of consumer co-contributions – such as the Plan B model advocated by DCM Group, where those with the means to pay contribute to the cost of their care – seen as a foregone conclusion, and public-private partnerships essential.

“As inevitably more co-payments emerge, the client/family provider relationship becomes far more important, because they are the ones who then pay a higher share of the costs. Also, private for-profit companies will emerge more and more on the long-term care and services market,” they wrote.

The GAN stresses, however, that aged care services need to remain “reachable, accessible, and affordable”, in regional areas as well as in major cities – but notes that a one-size-fits-all solution is not necessary, with different tiers of service a possibility.

“The long-term care services should be to some extent affordable, with the out-of-the-pocket payments set at an affordable level. Different levels of quality of services should be considered, starting at a baseline with so-called ‘hotel services/housing and dinner,’” it said.

“We all have different quality levels of housing and catering during our lives, mainly in relation to our incomes and economic situation. It is not necessary to unify that to some universal level at the end of people’s lives in care facilities.”

LESS TALK, MORE ACTION

Ultimately, the GAN says, arguing back and forth over which solution is best for aged care is meaningless, as there is no perfect solution that fits every country, or even most countries – instead, a holistic approach must be taken that takes a range of different care solutions and provider types into account, and reform must be

placed high on every government and provider’s to-do list.

“We are spending too much time on these discussions, sometimes advocating for one or the other solution. Yet the future of long-term care lies in all of the above: public and private providers, not-for-profit and for-profit providers, community-based and residential services, informal care and professional care provision, public and private spendings, and so on.”

“The only way to be successful in anything is to really want it, to strive for it, and to make it a priority.”

LEADERS SUMMIT 2023
THE BUSINESS OF AGEING

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Hear Jiri speak at the 2023 ‘New Horizons’ LEADERS SUMMIT on the changing face of aged care globally.

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BaptistCare chooses optimism and growth

CHARLES MOORE

Chief Executive Officer at BaptistCare NSW & ACT

PAUL OSTROWSKI

Home care facing quantum change

COVID-19

Aged care providers owed millions by Government

JASON BINDER

Only big village and care operators will survive

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This issue of SATURDAY is a tale of two sectors – one beset by challenges and one that is ripe with opportunities.

The big news this week of course is the departure of Australian Unity's head of Residential Communities Bev Smith as the mutual fund announced a review into its residential aged care operations.

With high occupancy and proven care model, Australian Unity has long been considered one of the sector's success stories – so what will this mean for the wider sector? DCM founder Chris Baynes gives his thoughts.

Residential care operators have particularly been challenged by COVID-19 and as we highlight in our first story, delays in Government reimbursement are having a significant financial impact.

Over in home care, there are warnings that competition for the customer will only intensify as the new home care program approaches.

But there is also cause for optimism, as outlined by our cover BaptistCare NSW & ACT CEO Charles Moore.

A passionate advocate for the ageing sector, Charles takes us through the Profit for Purpose organisation's strategy to meet the demand for ageing accommodation and grow its customer base.

Plus, make sure you check out the story on the European Ageing Network (EAN)'s latest report – it's a salient reminder that more people will be receiving care in the community in the future and providers will need to adapt quickly.

These issues will be canvassed in full at our **2023 'New Horizons' LEADERS SUMMIT** on 16-17 March in Sydney at the Hyatt Regency – so why not book your place now and join the conversation? [Register here.](#)



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We love feedback about any issue of SATURDAY – or any story from The Weekly Source network – so please get in touch.

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