



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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ELLIOT URGES AUSTRALIA'S AGED CARE PROVIDERS TO GET ON BOARD WITH IT SYSTEMS – BETTER MEDICATION CARE AND FINANCIAL SAVINGS

Minister for Ageing Mrs Justine Elliot today said aged care providers who adopt new information technology systems can improve resident care and make significant financial savings.

Mrs Elliot was referring to new research and clinical IT trials recently undertaken by the Federal Government - at the 20th Annual Nursing and Management Issues Congress in Sydney today.

“We are seeing major progress in clinical-monitoring trials - the results provide important opportunities for the sector,” Mrs Elliot said.

“One IT aged care trial resulted in a cost saving of approximately \$200,000 across the 23 participating homes.

“If adopted by all 2,870 nursing homes across Australia - this one program alone could translate into potential savings in the order of \$25 million,” she said.

“Another trial demonstrated that information technology for health care professionals prescribing medication can slash prescribing and medication review times by more than half – while providing greater accuracy.

“A GP who used an e-prescribing product in the trial reported that he could produce five to six medication charts in less than 20 minutes, when it used to take over 45 minutes.

“I urge providers to adopt new information technology, save on their bottom line and take Australia closer to a seamless care-delivery system - between healthcare providers and aged care homes,” Mrs Elliot said.

Mrs Elliot also released the results of an ‘aged care sector IT survey’ today.

“The Federal Government is building a modern Australia capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century,” Mrs Elliot said.

“The Rudd Government has stated as part of its election commitments that it will provide up to \$4.7 billion and make regulatory changes to roll out a high-speed fibre broadband network - to boost Australia’s productivity.

“Already, a third of Australia’s aged care services are capable of electronically exchanging information with the Department of Health and Ageing and Medicare Australia.

Mrs Elliot cited another trial – *TeleMedCare* – a mobile point-of-care device – which uses the latest technology to automatically measure for blood pressure, temperature, pulse, heart rate and lung function.

“The increase in monitoring helps improve the communication between staff in aged care homes, GP’s and pharmacists - helping to save lives and make treatment more responsive,” Mrs Elliot said.

“This program also saw the management of residents’ medications using biometric fingerprint recognition to identify the staff administering the medication.

“This helps GPs with the remote management of residents – as they are able to use the data offsite to monitor a resident’s clinical status.

“Doctors, pharmacists and providers who may be geographically apart can now work closely in ‘real time’.

“And, providers can save on costs from not having a doctor on site – while providing an even better service through a combination of expert opinions.

“The research and trials show how Australian aged care providers can take the lead in modern aged care; improve the care of residents and reduce operating costs through the use of information technology,” Mrs Elliot said.

Summary of findings

The survey involved more than 3,000 of the 4,000 services in the sector. It showed they used more than 30,000 computers, with 99.8 per cent using at least one computer, and 97 per cent of the services having Internet access.

The IT Survey report and summaries of the product trials are available on the department’s web site at:

www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/ageing-rescare-econnect.htm

Ageing in Australia

Australia’s population is getting older. Around 13 per cent of our population (some 2.8 million people) is aged 65 years or older. This is expected to rise to 18 per cent by 2021 and to 26 per cent (around 7 million people) in 2051. The number of people aged over 80 years will almost double over the next 20 years.

Australia is experiencing a new demographic phenomenon with citizens now enjoying the fourth longest life expectancy in the world – and a major shift in the number of people living to be more than 100. Currently, there are 2,860 Australians over the age of 100 and that is expected to explode to 78,000 by 2055.

Details: Ruci Fixter – 0415 359 023 or (02) 6277-7280