

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON AGEING

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

13th June 2008.

Ministers for Ageing tackle tough aged care issues

At an historic inaugural meeting held on the NSW North Coast today, Australian ministers responsible for ageing and aged care, as well as well as representatives of the Australian Local Government Association, agreed to work together and respond to Australia's changing ageing population.

Convened and chaired by Federal Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot, the Conference confirmed that their objectives were about working together in the spirit of cooperation and ending the blame game. This is also about preparing for the challenges of Australia in the 21st century.

The Conference agreed to work together on the challenges of psycho-geriatric care and establish an expert group to advise governments. This will complement \$2 million in research funding announced by the federal government today to assist in the study, care and treatment of people with severe psychogeriatric conditions in aged care homes.

In addition, Conference members also agreed to:

- ongoing work to improve and strengthen the Aged Care Assessment Program to ensure more timely, consistent and quality assessments of frail older people for Australian Government subsidised aged care services;
- examine improvements to age-appropriate housing;
- gather advice for future consideration on ways to streamline the regulation of the physical standard of residential care buildings;
- undertake work to enhance the independence of older people receiving services arising from the national Home and Community Care Forum;
- a forum with states and territories and local government on aged care planning ratios and allocation processes;
- support the Global Conference of the International Federation of Ageing to be held in Melbourne in 2010 – more than 2000 delegates from 120 countries are expected to attend;
- promote social measures to reduce social isolation among older Australians and report back on examples of best practice for further consideration at the next meeting of the Ministerial Conference;
- support the United Nations International Day of Older People on October 1, 2008 and promote the day as a means to enhance social inclusion;
- the Ministerial Conference meeting again later this year in Victoria with Minister Lisa Neville as chair of that meeting.

Other items discussed included the Home and Community Care program and the COAG processes to reform Specific Purpose Payments (SPPs); community care reform with all

jurisdictions agreeing to work together to achieve more integrated services for clients; the role of carers and respite services reform; and the importance of grandparents, carers and volunteers.

About 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.

Currently, there are 2,860 Australians over the age of 100 and that is expected to increase to 78,000 by 2055.

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