

Aged Care

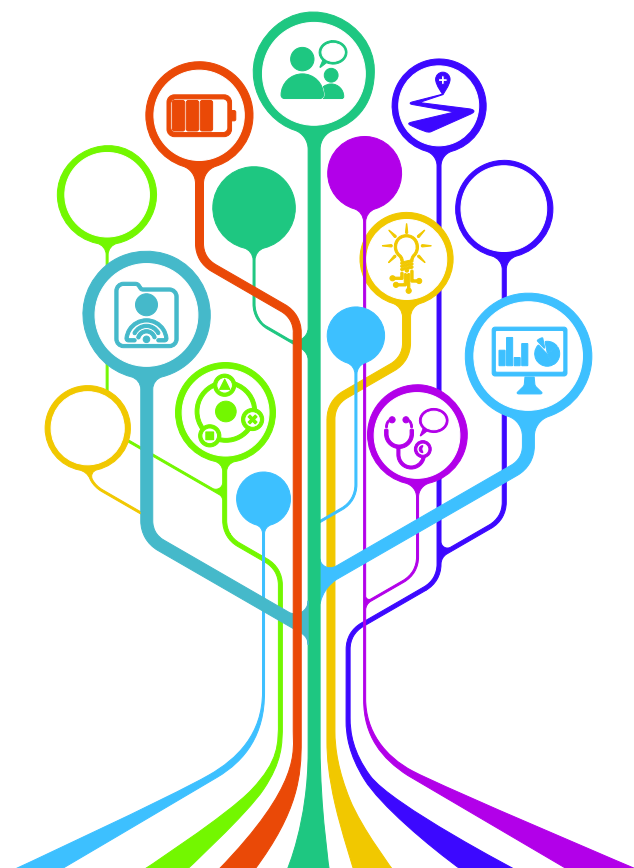
A key priority for WAPHA

The Federal Government has set the Primary Health Networks six priority areas for targeted work. Aged Care is one of these. WAPHA intends to commission services for older adult Western Australians which support them in leading healthy, productive and connected lives. WAPHA will focus on the integration of services and prioritise the improved co-ordination between aged care, primary care and social care in WA to ensure that older adults receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

WAPHA's planning and commissioning strategy will be underpinned by removing existing barriers to integrated aged care for the older adult population in WA.

WAPHA recognises the need to commission evidence-based, patient centred services that clearly provide positive health outcomes for older adults. WAPHA's commissioning will recognise existing services that already provide such outcomes and will provide for complementary resources, supports and / or additional resources as needed.

Aged care is the personal and / or nursing care to support older adults living in Australia to stay as independent and healthy as possible. Aged care can also assist those caring for an older adult by helping with that care. Aged care is delivered in an aged care home or via home care (1).



Australian context

The Australian population is growing and rapidly ageing. Between 2010 and 2050, the number of older adults (65 to 84 years) is projected to more than double from 2.6 million to 6.3 million. The very old (85 years and over) will more than quadruple from 0.4 million to 1.8 million (2).

The proportion of Australia's population aged over 65 grew from 8% in 1970-71 to 14.4% (or 3.3 million people) in 2013 (3). This trend is expected to continue, with the proportion of the population aged over 65 projected to almost double to approximately 25% of the total population by 2055 (4).

Demand for healthcare services to meet the needs of older adult Australians is growing rapidly. As they age, many Australians will experience chronic illnesses, disability and / or physical or cognitive decline (5). These Australians require varying levels of care and support.

Future generations of older adults are likely to have more complex health needs and expect a higher quality and level of services. The preference of older Australians will be to live and be cared for in the community wherever possible, and for as long as possible. The demand for quality dementia and palliative care in all settings will increase (6).

Aged care services in Australia include a range of health and social care services which are delivered by a mix of public, private and Not for Profit organisations, as well as by individual carers. Presently, over one million older Australians receive formal aged care services. By 2050 this is expected to rise to over 3.5 million Australians using aged care services each year (7).

The current aged care system is under pressure and has many weaknesses. It can be difficult to navigate, services are often limited as is consumer choice, and quality is variable. The Australian health care system is fragmented and the distribution of services available to older adult Australians is uneven across the country.

A robust plan is needed for the future care needs of older adult Western Australians and mechanisms for connecting the person with the medical and health services they need when they need them.

West Australian context

All States and Territories experienced growth in people aged 65 and over (for the year ended 30 June 2014). Western Australia had the third largest growth at 4.2% and also for people 85 and older - a growth of 5% (8).

In June 2013, 314,356 Western Australians were aged 65 and older, equating to 12.5% of the population.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has projected that Western Australia will experience the largest percentage increase in population between 2012 and 2061, more than doubling the 2012 population of 2.4 million to 6.4 million by 2061. During this time, those aged 65 and over will increase by four times and those aged 85 and over will increase by more than six times.

It is these people that the aged care sector provides most care for, and with an increase in people needing care, the aged care sector must be supported in growing to meet to meet the care needs of older adult Western Australians (9). The needs of WA's aged care patients are as diverse as people are (10).

This includes culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Australians, veterans, the homeless, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) Australians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Every objective and outcome for WAPHA in the planning and commissioning of aged care services in WA requires consideration of diversity, overcoming barriers to access and achieving equity of outcomes.

WAPHA's position

WAPHA affirms the position of the Productivity Commission, in its *Inquiry into the Care of Older Australians*, that aged care services need to be designed around the wellbeing of older adults and delivered in ways that respect their dignity and support their independence.

Aged care policy must focus on the physical, social, emotional, cultural and spiritual needs of older adults, connectedness to others, ability to exert influence on their environment and their safety, within the framework of their expressed life choices.

WAPHA will work to support and enable a quality, affordable, patient centred aged care system in WA in which consumers, the health, social and aged care sectors work in partnership to ensure timely and holistic care for older adult Australians across the spectrum of their care needs – from wellness to health promotion to early detection and diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation through to palliative and end of life care.

The outcomes of these partnerships must be subject to robust monitoring, review and evaluation processes.

In its planning and commissioning strategies, WAPHA will be cognisant of the harmful impact of loneliness and social isolation on older Western Australians being cared for at home.

Emerging statistics showing a higher incidence of depression and suicide amongst older Australians reinforce the need for WAPHA to focus on integrating primary care within medical, residential care and home care settings.

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WAPHA resolves to:

- Utilise robust data to identify primary health care needs and to develop commissioning priorities, and share the information as appropriate;
- Plan and commission for access to equitable, person centred services that can change as the needs of older Western Australians requiring care and support change;
- Understand the roles of WA's Aged Care organisations and key stakeholders and avoid unnecessary duplication in the planning and commissioning of primary health care services for older adults;
- Plan and commission primary health care services that are linked to other medical and social care services received by older adults and are co-ordinated at the General Practice level;
- Work to reduce unnecessary hospital and Emergency Department admissions and facilitate a more timely and functional interface between the aged care sector and General Practices;
- Support a system in WA that is easy to navigate and understand in terms of older people's knowledge of the care and support that is available and routes of access to these services;
- Where identified service gaps exist, plan and commission primary care services for older adult Western Australians that are accessible and available where and when needed and that provide for appropriate short, medium and long term support;
- Recognise that older adult Western Australians living in their own homes require access to community care to support them to maintain their health, wellbeing and independence and to have access to regular medical care and supervision;
- Recognise the need for the alignment of aged care, disability, community services and healthcare systems to ensure consumers can transition seamlessly between service systems and receive the right care and support, in the right place, at the right time;
- Adopt a consumer directed approach that allows older Western Australians to exercise choice and control over their lives, to record their wishes in a format which is accessible at the point of care and to die with dignity and respect;
- Collaborate respectfully with existing clinicians, health professionals and service providers to review current models and strategies and develop innovative and meaningful partnerships at the local and State-wide level to ensure a collective impact approach, and
- Understand and incorporate the needs of carers in aged care.

References

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