

Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

Response to Consultation on the Terms of Reference
September 2018

Introduction

Australians have been shocked by the recent revelations of abuse in Aged Care, and have welcomed the announcement of a Royal Commission.

Research Australia believes research can play a critical role in delivering safe, high quality Aged Care and has urged the Government to consider the role for research in developing the Terms of Reference. Our submission to the Government, responding to the two specific questions posed in the electronic form, is provided below.

Do you have feedback on issues the Royal Commission should consider in relation to the specific listed areas?

- **The quality of care provided to older Australians, and the extent of substandard care;**
- **The challenge of providing care to Australians with disabilities living in residential aged care, particularly younger people with disabilities;**
- **The challenge of supporting the increasing number of Australians suffering dementia and addressing their care needs as they age;**
- **The future challenges and opportunities for delivering aged care services in the context of changing demographics, including in remote, rural and regional Australia;**
- **Any other matters that the Royal Commission considers necessary.**

Research Australia submits that there is a clear role for research and the implementation of evidence based care to improve both the delivery of aged care and the development and monitoring of effective standards. (This includes understanding what is required to provide quality care to younger people with disabilities living in aged care facilities.)

There are currently many areas of care where there is a strong evidence base for what is appropriate care but this care has not been routinely implemented. Significant research has also been undertaken into where the risk for aged care residents lie, but these have not been addressed. Evidence based quality indicators exist and have been implemented effectively in some jurisdictions but have not been adopted more widely.

‘The incidence of premature and potentially preventable deaths of nursing home residents has increased over the past decade. A national policy framework is needed to reduce the incidence of premature deaths among Australians living in nursing homes.’ [Premature deaths of nursing home residents: an epidemiological analysis J.E. Ibrahim et al, **Med J Aust** 2017; 206 (10): 442-447. doi:10.5694/mja16.00873 Published online: 5 June 2017]

Understanding the barriers to implementation of evidence based care, and developing models and strategies to accelerate and improve the adoption of evidence based care is a key area requiring further research.

Research about the best models of care, for example for managing residents with dementia, is being undertaken constantly, and can provide a clear pathway to improved care. [Caring for Aged Dementia Care Resident Study (CADRES) of person-centred care, dementia-care mapping, and usual care in dementia: a cluster-randomised trial Lynn Chenoweth et al, **Lancet Neurol** 2009; 8: 317–25 Published **Online** March 12, 2009 DOI:10.1016/S1474- 4422(09)70045-6] However, we lack appropriate processes for the distribution and adoption of such research based models of care.

In other areas, the evidence base for appropriate quality care is lacking, leading to significant variations in the levels of care provided.

There is also a role for research in understanding our aged care system better. Why is it that there are such significant variations in care across Australia? Research to identify the reasons for this variation (resources, training, culture, staffing) and to test models that improve aged care delivery are critical to understanding and redressing these issues.

We urge the adoption of a Term of Reference relating to:

- the role of research in identifying quality aged care
- the role of research in identifying quality care for younger people with disabilities living in aged care facilities,
- the role of research in supporting the more rapid and comprehensive adoption of evidence-based care (creating a research responsive aged care sector).
- the role of research in developing effective quality care indicators and quality assurance mechanisms
- areas where more research is needed as identified during the course of the Inquiry.

We urge the adoption of an additional Term of Reference, to investigate effective models of evidence based aged care in international settings, e.g. the Netherlands.

Are there any other areas that should be considered by the Royal Commission?

Research Australia urges the Commission to adopt a Term of Reference exploring alternatives to residential aged care and the further research required to support older Australians to remain healthier, and at home, for longer. This should include the role for technology to augment, not replace, human contact.