

VICTORIA PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2019/2020

Who we are

We are the leading aged-care peak body supporting over 700 church, charitable and community-based not-for-profit organisations that provide accommodation and care to about one million older Australians.

What we do

We represent, lead and support our members to achieve excellence in providing quality affordable housing, and community and residential care services for older Australians. ASCA is passionate about the quality and value of the services our members provide, regardless of their size, service mix, or location.

Importance to Victoria

Our members are invaluable to the community and the people they serve, and make a significant contribution to Victoria economy.

Aged care is a key future growth sector for Victoria, and one of the largest employers and economic contributors to our many small communities.

Submission purpose

Our submission addresses key areas relating to aged care and the Victorian Government:

1. **Strengthening the interface with health**
2. **Housing affordability & homelessness**
3. **Retirement living**
4. **Workforce planning**

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1. Strengthening the Interface with Health

Mental Health

People with clinically diagnosed mental disorders are eligible for Medicare rebates for up to ten individual and ten group services per year. This rebate is not available to older Victorians living in aged care facilities.

ACSA recommends

As part of the Victorian Royal Commission into Mental Health, the State Government calls on the Commonwealth to ensure older Australians in residential care can access mental health support at the same level as the general population.



Oral health

Creating an effective interface between oral health and aged care is crucial. There are clear links between poor oral and poor general health. Oral health funding should be specifically allocated for older people living in residential aged care, and a stronger focus is needed on prevention prior to older people entering care to keep them well and independent for longer. Strengthening the interface with the home support and care systems is critical.

ACSA recommends

The Government funds a study to provide the Victorian Government and RACFs with the information they need to implement an effective oral health program for aged-care residents. This could enhance the care and quality of life for older Victorians, and save the State health system significant costs.



Palliative Care

Older Australians are increasingly living with chronic degenerative diseases including cancer and dementia. Between 60% and 70% of people at the end of life prefer to be cared for and to die comfortably at home, regardless of whether home is in the community or residential care.

Current residential care funding does not allow for specialist services and best practice that is often available in the community. By building and supporting the delivery of palliative care within aged care, the Government will reduce the high cost of acute health care to the State sector.

ACSA requests the Victorian Government consult with our organisation and members in the implementation of the Commonwealth Government initiative (The Comprehensive Palliative Care in Aged Care measure) to ensure aged-care residents benefit directly.

ACSA recommends

Increased palliative care funding applied specifically to the expansion and development of community nursing services. A portion of this funding would be applied to specific workforce development strategies for those in critical front-line community nursing roles.



Health and Aged Care Project

Older people staying healthy and independent longer is good for the individual and for the state. Governments need to collaborate and resource the aged-care sector as key partners to control the future costs of acute health. Reducing avoidable hospital admissions would make a positive impact on reducing State Government health costs.

ACSA requests the provision of \$500,000 from the Government over the next 3 years for a “Health & Aged Care Project – strengthening the interface and building collaboration” with a key measure being reducing avoidable hospital admissions from residential and home-based aged care.



2. Housing Affordability & Homelessness

The provision of housing with appropriate levels of support is needed to tackle the growing issue of homelessness amongst our elderly, particularly older single women. A national housing strategy for older Australians is the responsibility of all levels of government.

Our not-for-profit members in Victoria play a key role in supporting older people through the provision of housing, accommodation and care, particularly in rural areas and for those at risk of homelessness.

ACSA recommends

The urgent creation of a specific grants pool to support the rehabilitation of affordable housing for older people. This would include independent living units, existing public housing for older people, and home maintenance/modification programs for existing aged-care providers.



ACSA recommends

The establishment of a capital pool quarantined to organisations wanting to build housing for older persons reliant on pensions.





3. Retirement Living

Many aged-care providers also operate retirement villages – a housing option that enables older people to live independently. These are separate services addressing different needs and should be considered as such.

ACSA supports the Federal and State Governments' addressing of regulatory gaps. Industry has identified initiatives that would ensure older people have transparent information and transactions with retirement village operators. Industry-wide initiatives such as good practice guidelines and improved training for operators are also under consideration.

ACSA requests the provision of \$30,000 pa funding for 4 years to educate providers on regulatory obligations.



4. Workforce Planning

ACSA is committed to helping aged-care providers meet the challenge of creating a stable workforce to manage Australia's growing population. ACSA supports the Victorian Government's initiative for traineeships and apprenticeship pathways through free TAFE courses, and seeks to work closely with the Government to ensure the quality of course outcomes meets industry requirements.

ACSA requests the provision of \$400,000* pa from the Government to employ 3 workforce officers to build industry and provider capability to maximise returns on available funding, and build employment and career opportunities for Victorians.

**Includes funding for a youth engagement program to promote a clear pathway for the industry's future workforce demands.*

