



Aged Care Nurses Special Interest Group ANF (Vic Branch)

# SIGNificance

Issue 6

July 2011



## Message from the Editor

Greetings to all and a warm welcome to our new members. We have had an eventful start to the year which has flown by all too quickly.

This is our second issue for the year with updates from the 'BECAUSE WE CARE' campaign and other news. Also in this issue is Part 2 of Swarupa Sridharan's article 'Aged Care Research and Its delineation in Practice'. Part 1 was published in issue 3.

Changes have recently taken place which have affected our SIG. Due to reorganization within the ANF office, Vanessa Standfield's role assisting SIGs has been replaced by Carole de Greenlaw who is now our contact person within the ANF. (cdegreenlaw@anfvic.asn.au). We look forward to working with Carole.

You will have already received a number of emails from Carole passing on information and invitations to study days, seminars etc. This service is part of your membership privilege and offers some ex-

cellent opportunities for professional development.

A VERY WARM THANK YOU to Vanessa Standfield for her patience and consideration in assisting the ACNSIG with the many tasks she performed – maintaining our data base, emails, mail-outs, bookings as well as formatting and publishing our newsletter.

As members of the Aged Care Nurses SIG we welcome your comments and concerns, being aware of the conditions in which most of us work. We also appreciate how difficult it is to get to meetings because of work/family commitments, but are disappointed when apologies are not forwarded. The ACNSIG is your organization, it exists for your benefit, but needs your input to be effective.

Either myself or our secretary Lorraine are happy to receive emails or contact can be made through Carole at the ANF (Vic) details as above.

**Erica Kurec**

## **A**GED CARE NURSES

Special Interest Group ANF (Vic Branch)

### Inside this issue:

Message from the Editor	<b>1</b>
Because We Care Campaign	<b>2</b>
Aged Care Research and its Delineation in Practice—Part 2	<b>3–5</b>
Upcoming Activities	<b>5</b>
Continuing Professional Development Grants	<b>5</b>
Next General Meeting	<b>5</b>

## Position Vacant

It is with regret that we announce the resignation of our treasurer Helen Lavery due to personal reasons. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Helen sincerely for her contribution to the Aged Care Nurses SIG during her time with us and wish her all the best for the future.

The position of treasurer is now open and we invite members to forward their nominations. The executive meets about 4 times a year which includes General Meetings. These take place in the city, usually at ANF House as it is centrally located. Your response will be warmly received.

For further information, please contact ACN SIG Committee on:

Erica Kurec (Chairperson)  
kurec@optusnet.com.au

Lorraine Andrew (Secretary)  
stevelor79@hotmail.com

# Because We Care Campaign

The campaign has entered its new, extremely important phase. This is the Pledge signing activity in which MP's, Senators and other key stake holders who have the capacity to influence decision making, are invited to sign a pledge of support for the provision of quality care for older Australians.



**The ANF and ACNSIG once again calls on participation from our members in this activity. Keep up to date with the campaign by logging onto [www.becausewecare.org.au](http://www.becausewecare.org.au)**

The first MP to sign the Pledge was Adam Bandt, Federal Member for Melbourne during a visit to Gregory Lodge Aged Care Facility in Flemington on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> of May.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> June, members of ANF, job reps and Aged care nurses met with Anna Burke, Federal Member for Chisholm at her office in Syndal where she happily signed the Pledge. Anna generously gave us nearly an hour of her time discussing a range of issues covering health and aged care as well as other matters. The ACNSIG would like to thank both Adam and Anna for their time and encouragement.

At time of writing, invitations have been sent to other Federal MP's from local constituencies, and we look forward to a supportive response.

The ANF and the ACNSIG once again calls on participation from our members in this activity, looking forward to working together to achieve the objectives and outcomes that are necessary for ensuring the Aged Care sector is properly staffed so that quality care can indeed be delivered. Keep up to date with the campaign by logging onto [www.becausewecare.org.au](http://www.becausewecare.org.au)



## Aged Care Research and its Delineation in Practice—Part 2

In an earlier edition on this topic in this newsletter (Significance, July 2010) the concept of compression of morbidity was discussed. This term, implying an active quality of life for older people and particularly older Australians, is a sophisticated concept but surprisingly simple in practice. In this second part, a closer look is presented here, in light of the productivity commission's draft report for reforms in aged care, before the final report comes out in June 2011.

The Productivity Commission details its approach as **“predicated on improving the wellbeing of the community as a whole and its proposals, based on this framework are aimed at developing a system of care and support for older Australians that is more efficient, equitable, effective relating to choice, quality and appropriateness and sustainable.”** 1

In following the need for supportive research and findings to enable the intended outcome of reform, Simon Biggs, in a chapter on Policy Spaces in Health and Welfare points out that “spaces that emerge in the field of social policy are particularly important to the mature imagination, because they have come to define in the popular mind, the shape and circumference of aging.”2

The Productivity Commission proposes that older Australians be given every opportunity to maintain or regain **functional** independence. It is interesting to note that Biggs, in his research warns us that one of consequences of structured dependency would be that disengagement by older people from the rest of society is seen as **functional**, and that rather than investing in services to support an active later life, policies of non-interference would be a greater kindness, leading to

minimalist solutions to their problems. 3

This would not be alarming, if it was not despite the evidence presented by compression of morbidity whereby older people have an active or productive life ending in a terminal drop, which is recognized widely as the realistic representation of aging, signifying that the best practice efforts towards enabling and maintaining functional independence to the very end, is not without some serious pitfalls, requiring equally serious consideration.

So, what could organisations, professionals and people involved in formally or informally caring for older Australians do, to enable them to maintain or regain **functional independence to the extent that is imagined**, without falling through the cracks of the socio-political context, in which, the successful transition into a lifestyle of their choosing is made by them?

An answer to this question comes from Biggs, who, in a chapter on post-modern aging, points out that a key to these new imagined possibilities would be, a rejection of deterministic narratives in favour of the elder as a consumer of more youthful lifestyle choices.4 To understand this statement, the first part is about the conception of the aging individual as a consumer, which protects his/ her identity and particularly, the right to choose one's identity in a changing world, whose pre-occupation is avoiding fixation and keeping options open as opposed to the previous era of stability at all costs. The second part of the above statement gives rise to a crucial understanding about how attitudes could inform policy making, especially that, - “At the heart of the difficulty of explaining what it's like to be old lies the awareness of an experiential difference between

**The Productivity Commission proposes that older Australians be given every opportunity to maintain or regain functional independence.**

## Aged Care Research—continued

the physical processes of aging, as reflected in outward appearance and the inner or subjective “real self” which paradoxically remains young.”

If the older person in society represents the most natural segment of life conducive to the inner identity, particularly, in a reflective sense, then should not this part of life also have the greatest freedom of identity, from which to construct or deconstruct, its selfhood?

Research in aging is markedly diverging from aged care as is experienced by the **older Australian**, evidenced by such a snapshot, with elements of reported change for the better and also, some areas requiring a greater involvement of resources. In *Social Spaces and Mature identity*, Biggs again points to the findings in research, in relation to the problems rife in the current aged care system that both provoked the reforms initiated by the Productivity Commission, and form **the basis of the new** proposals, particularly, concerns that have been raised, that techniques used to justify a managerial approach to care fail to provide, arguably the most significant outcome of all, i.e. **the reflective spaces, 5** in which all the people interacting in this environment can consciously use the relationship they have to execute the more pivotal functions of psychological and personal development and fulfilment, which in itself, is an age-free zone, having more to do with the self than an identity based upon age, or gender, for that matter. This is further elaborately understood when Munro, in relation to the discordant identity of the older person in society as distinct from a consumer in the welfare state, describes how, contemporary managerial practices actively discourage a sense of belonging, in pursuit of continued organisational change.<sup>6</sup>

One of the important things that arise out of studying contemporary aging, is that older people should not become absent due to their circumstances and visible changes towards a reversal of the relative absence of **the legitimizing space** for aging itself has to come about to address the problem of ignorance among younger groups who are found loitering and searching for themselves, especially, in the inter-generational gaps, which calls for mutual appreciation across divergent groups in community, departments in government and services in business as well as a comprehensive tour of this interesting and consciously developing area of the older Australian’s life, lifestyle.

A current edition of *The Senior*, May 2011, to introduce a snapshot of research turning into practice, offers advertisements for supported living and retirement villages that openly list and contest the features that differ from aged care as understood to be nursing homes and hostels for high care and low care, with an explicit acknowledgement of the changing view of aged care, which is related to the older Australian’s needs as a consumer who has every right to choose his/ her lifestyle, as much as the next customer; and which is the prerogative of the people surrounding an older person, including the family, friends, carers and professionals and experts. It also features a vast choice of travel, encouraging the senior to get out and about, while the main story tackles the Government’s involvement through policy and businesses for their value statements, with regards to mature age employment.<sup>7</sup>

The challenge for the reforms seems to be an active reversal of the current trends towards globalisation and a free market whose exaggerated presence overshadowed

**Research in aging is markedly diverging from aged care as is experienced by the older Australian**

## Aged Care Research—continued

ows the more galvanising and organic development of relationships. Although this lies outside of the scope of this article, it is nevertheless, a start in uncovering the concepts that underpin research turning into practice or at least observable and mutable reality. The relationships between older Australia-

lians and people in the general population are relationships requiring the most congruent attention, since the intactness of what we attempt to create is inside of the repository of experiences, reflections and valuable insights of those who contain a blueprint for the future, in their past.

### References:

Productivity Commission 2010, Caring for Older Australians, Draft Inquiry Report, Canberra, pp 6, 462 (24 pgs)

2, 3, 4, 5, 6 Biggs, Simon et al. "The Mature Imagination: Dynamics of identity in midlife and beyond." 1999. Open University Press, Buckingham. pp 149, 143, 54-64, 62, 139, 145. (15 pgs)

7. The Senior, Victoria, May 2011 edition with The Senior Traveller (20 pgs). Australian Senior Publications, Riverina Media Group. pp 1, 4

### Suggested Search Keywords:

Productivity Commission, Aging, Reforms, Aging research, aged care, functional independence, reflective spaces, older Australians, freedom of identity, selfhood, welfare, health, policy.

## Upcoming Activities—Combined Study Day with Nurses for Continence

The ACNSIG and NFCSIG are organizing a combined study day for Saturday 10 September at ANF House from 9.30 to 3.30, followed by drinks at a nearby venue.

Set aside this date now. Program details will be made available once finalized.

## Continuing Professional Development Grants

Round 1 offering 2 grants of \$250.00 closed on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

Round 2 commences from 1<sup>st</sup> of July, closing 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011

**Our next General Meeting in on Monday 22nd  
August at 4.00 p.m. at ANF House**

**Set aside  
Saturday 10th  
September for  
a combined  
Study Day at  
ANF House  
with Nurses  
for Continence**

# AGED

## **CARE NURSES**

Special Interest Group  
ANF (Vic Branch)

### **Aged Care Nurses Special Interest Group ANF (Vic Branch)**

C/- The Australian Nursing Federation  
540 Elizabeth Street  
Melbourne Vic 3000

Phone: 9275 9333  
Fax: 9275 9344  
E-mail: [records@anfvic.asn.au](mailto:records@anfvic.asn.au)

More photos from the visit to Anna Burke's office



We're on the web:

[www.anfvic.asn.au](http://www.anfvic.asn.au)