Flexible care and care for people with special needs

Strengths and weaknesses of aged care services
Aged people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds require culturally appropriate services and support. This must not be generic, but must reflect the diversity within the different CALD groups

Many aged care facilities do not have staff with adequate cultural competencies to develop programs and provide appropriate support and services to aged people from CALD backgrounds.

Currently the government funds programs such as the Community Visitors Scheme as a stopgap solution. Many of the visitors in this scheme are also aged and are struggling to fulfil their roles. It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit new volunteers with the bilingual and bicultural skills.

A more effective and sustainable solution would be to allocate resources to improve the cultural competence of all staff in aged care facilities, so that their programs and services meet the unique needs of aged persons from CALD backgrounds.

Aged persons from CALD backgrounds who wish to remain in their family home must have their needs assessed in a holistic manner. Identified needs must be met by appropriate and co-ordinated care and services. There should be regular monitoring and evaluation of the needs and services to ensure that aged persons choosing to remain in their family homes continue to receive appropriate care and services.

Objectives of the aged care system

Effectiveness of the aged care system
The objectives for government involvement in the system are comprehensive and universal, however anecdotal evidence suggests that existing services for aged people from CALD backgrounds lack cultural sensitivity and are not culturally and linguistically inclusive. This needs to be incorporated in the redesign process.

Broader conception of care and disability policy
Lack of physical and mental ability are closely linked with ageing, so a broader conception of care and disability policy is more appropriate. This is certainly the case for aged people from CALD backgrounds, as many revert to their first culture and language as they age.

Who should pay and what should they pay for?

Provision of choice for older people requiring care
In their declining years, aged people from CALD backgrounds value having the choice to receive services privately or in an aged care facility. The best way to achieve this is by care consumers receiving payments.

What role for regulation?

Rights of aged care consumers
Aged people from CALD backgrounds have the added disadvantage of cultural and language barriers. They understand little of their rights and obligations. Considerable effort needs to be expended to increase their awareness and understanding of the aged care system.

Granting wider powers to the ombudsman would considerably enhance their options for complaint and redress.

Are current regulatory arrangements a disincentive?
The current arrangements are particularly concerning to aged people from CALD backgrounds, as often all they have is their family home.

Regulatory reforms
Two key reforms need to be implemented:
-   removal of stamp duty on the sale of property
-   relaxing thresholds for eligibility for receiving the aged pension.

Roles of different levels of government

Administration of the aged care system
A more centralised aged care system would be particularly effective in helping aged people from CALD backgrounds to navigate the system. It should also provide substantial government savings through reduced duplication.

Interface of aged care, hospital and disability care systems
It is imperative that staff and administrators in all of these systems have cultural competencies for dealing with CALD aged issues and clients.

A workforce to care for the elderly

Key issues for current formal aged care workforce
Many people from CALD backgrounds are seeking employment in the aged care sector, but are facing numerous barriers to equitable access to employment opportunities in all areas of the aged care workforce.

Options for appropriately trained and flexible formal aged care workforce
Training and professional development for the aged care workforce must take into consideration the rapidly ageing CALD population (as identified by ABS statistics) and its implications for the aged care sector in the short and longer term.

Reforms to support informal carers and volunteers
There must be more consistency in the eligibility for and the type and amount of reimbursement for carers and volunteers.