

Age friendly communities

We should not be penalising people for ageing, but rather emphasising what they can do.¹

...we should be harnessing the goodwill and energy of the community to contribute to an effective partnership of shared responsibility ...²

- 2.1 The Committee heard evidence stressing the importance of the social networks that foster age friendly communities, kinship and family networks, neighbours and friendship groups, and formal and informal community groups more broadly.
- 2.2 This is demonstrated by the approach being developed by a group of local government authorities in the western suburbs of the Perth Metropolitan Area:

Positive ageing is...very much related to the creation of an *age-friendly community*, or the creating of a community which facilitates older people's participation and involvement in the community.

... an *age-friendly community* is one in which the broad environment (structures, facilities, services, and attitudes) is supportive and enables people to develop and maintain strong community ties and participate at the level of their choosing.³

1 Voloschenko S, transcript 7/03/2003, p 260.

2 Warn P, sub 26, p 28.

3 Western Suburbs Regional Organisation of Councils (WESROC), *Building strong communities through positive ageing*, Report of the WESROC Seniors' Needs Study, A project to encourage positive ageing in place, Exhibit 8. The report is also available at: <http://www.claremont.wa.gov.au/wesroc_senior_study.html>, p 6.

- 2.3 The Committee agrees that approaches encompassing individuals, families and their communities are necessary – with ‘communities’ being seen as including the built environments in which they live, their workplaces, businesses and social environments.
- 2.4 A wealth of information was presented to the Committee indicating the breadth, complexity and inter-relatedness of the issues involved. The evidence also gives insights into the ways in communities for an older Australia are being planned for and fostered right now.
- 2.5 In this chapter the Committee considers:
- the strategies that are being adopted to foster age friendly community environments;
 - the increasing importance of lifelong learning and whether provision is adequate for future needs; and
 - the contribution carers make to the community and the support given to carers by their communities.
- 2.6 The role of age friendly housing and transport in supporting the independence of older people, and the ongoing challenge of ensuring that older Australians continue to age healthy and are treated with dignity, are examined in subsequent chapters.

Promoting age-friendly community environments

- 2.7 The Committee was impressed by the role some local governments are playing in creating community environments that foster connectedness and social networks that contribute to well-being. Dr Silcox pointed out that local government is ‘...looking at creating social capital in their own area...’ through ‘...communities that are well networked and well linked’.⁴
- 2.8 This is typified by the *Building strong communities through positive ageing* study developed by the Western Suburbs Regional Organisation of Councils (WESROC) and its constituent councils in the western suburbs of the Perth Metropolitan Area.⁵ As representatives of participating Councils put it to The Committee, the WESROC report had crystallised for them

4 Silcox S, transcript 29/04/2003, pp 420-1.

5 Lee Phillips and Associates, *Building strong communities through positive ageing*, Report of the WESROC Seniors’ Needs Study: A project to encourage positive ageing in place, July 2002, Exhibit 8, <http://www.claremont.wa.gov.au/wesroc_senior_study.html>, p 2.

that what is good for the community is good for older people – and that older people are ‘actually part of society’.⁶

- 2.9 The Kingston City Council sees local government as having a major role in ensuring ‘liveability’ for all age groups through the design of their urban landscapes:

We will be particularly concentrating on the older age groups and saying: ‘What is it about a particular community or a particular area that makes it more or less liveable and how do we [improve liveability], through the provision of infrastructure, through simple things like making what they call pram crossings on footpaths accessible so there are no tripping points?’⁷

- 2.10 Not all issues are easily solved as they can be caught in conflicting policies involving different levels of government. Mr Burgess stated:

Our engineers build wonderful roundabouts, but they have no regard for the aged person who will eventually walk across a flow of traffic which is possibly travelling at high speed. ... we need integrated transport planning strategies taking a whole of government approach.⁸

- 2.11 Another innovative approach is being taken by the Central Coast Quality Ageing Planning Consortium, NSW, building on input from the community. Rather than waiting for the State Government or the Australian Government to initiate action, the Consortium is facilitating more responsive transport arrangements, improving information and how it may be accessed and actively exploring ways to integrate funding, coordinate services and care, providing support for carers, and enhancing living environments.⁹

- 2.12 Community input to the Consortium demonstrated clearly that many people are ill-prepared for life in retirement and this may be exacerbated by shifting locations at the time of retirement. Stress can arise from missing work, concerns about personal health, and relationship issues.¹⁰ Central Coast Quality Ageing Planning lays much emphasis on retirement planning, on preparing for ‘Starting Life Over After Work’ -- not the

6 Turner S and Silcox S, transcript 29/04/2003, pp 423-4.

7 McCullough T, transcript 31/3/03, p 339.

8 Burgess E, transcript 24/02/2003, pp 110.

9 Central Coast Area Health, sub 125, p 16; Blackwell J, transcript 24/02/2003, p 88.

10 Davies M, ‘The impact of relocation following retirement on well-being’, in *Maximising the Impact on Policy and Practice*, Proceedings of ERA 2003, Conference for Emerging Researchers in Ageing, Australasian Centre on Ageing, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, 2003, p 17.

financial side but about 'what you are going to do ... and how your relationships ... are going to be affected...'.¹¹

2.13 The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) stressed to the Committee the importance of improving capacity building in Indigenous communities where people may not have opportunities to contribute in a meaningful way. ATSIC suggested that, in areas where there is effectively no labour market, CDEP could be better focussed to foster community participation, to focus on 'How do you contribute to what is happening in your community'. The Peninsula Regional Council, Cape York, is taking this approach looking for increased school attendance, and addressing issues such as family violence and looking after houses.¹²

2.14 In this respect, the Committee notes the House of Representatives Standing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs has recently tabled its report into Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities, a report that made several recommendations on the subject of community programs and service delivery to Indigenous Australian communities. The recommendations recognise, among other things, the need for, and value of, training and mentoring programs in building capacity in Indigenous communities. The report recommended that:

... the Commonwealth Government:

- promote and further develop initiatives such as Indigenous Community Volunteers to enhance mentoring and skills development in Indigenous communities and organisations; and
- take a leadership role in encouraging partnerships and joint ventures between the private/corporate sector and Indigenous communities, organisations and individuals.¹³

2.15 Older Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CLDB), may feel socially isolated due to the communication problems which result from low levels of English language proficiency, loss of acquired English language skills with increasing age, or in some cases illiteracy in their own language. The Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia stressed to the Committee that more culturally and

11 Blackwell J, transcript 24/02/2003, pp 86-103; Burgess E, transcript 24/02/2003, pp 106-8; Health & Aged Care Roundtable, Isaacs, sub 105, p 4.

12 Gooda M, transcript 7/03/2003, pp 203-4.

13 House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Many ways forward: Report of the inquiry into capacity building and service delivery in Indigenous communities, Canberra, 2004, p 163. For further information of the Community Volunteer Program see Chapter 6.

linguistically appropriate community planning and services would better serve the needs of CLDB people.¹⁴

- 2.16 Older people themselves play a critical role in fostering social networks and connectedness. The Committee heard many stories of the two-way benefits flowing from older people's engagement in mentoring, 'grandparenting', volunteering (discussed in chapter 6), and active involvement in University of the Third Age (U3A).¹⁵
- 2.17 At school in the small farming community of Lock on the Eyre Peninsular history comes to life:
- In our school we have a senior farmer who is still living on his property at ...⁹⁴ I think he is. He has been in the area sever since he was a very young man ... and he goes and tells stories. It is like a history lesson to the children, once a week, and it is great interaction. They just love the day that Mr Mellor comes to tell of the history of the area and the advances that have been made in those 70-odd years. ¹⁶
- 2.18 Centrelink staff have personally contributed to social activities within their community to help aged Australians overcome isolation. Some have become involved in supporting community agencies, assisting with daily calls to check on the well-being of elderly people, and activities that assist older people to bridge the digital divide.¹⁷
- 2.19 Community interaction assists older people to maintain social links, stay physically active and stay mentally, emotionally and physically healthy. Older Australians who are actively engaged in their community and have purpose and meaning in their life are healthier on average and, according to the Dubbo study, may be less at risk of entering residential aged care.¹⁸

Encouraging lifelong learning

[Lifelong learning] is not just related to specific vocational training or education, which of course is important – as the nature of work

14 Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia, sub 140, p 2.

15 Cross J, transcript 28/04/2003, pp 382- 388; Burgess E, transcript 24/02/2003, p 113.

16 Lally P, transcript 28/04/2003, p 377.

17 Centrelink, sub 78, p 24.

18 McCallum J, Simons L and Simons J, 2003, *The Dubbo Study of the Health of the Elderly*, Australian Health Policy Institute, Commissioned Paper series 2003/06, pp 42- 46.

is changing, people do need opportunities to learn and develop new skills and knowledge – but also related to what effect learning has in relation to general engagement, health and maintenance of your participation. Learning assists in that whole process and assists in making you remain part of the community.¹⁹

- 2.20 Evidence to the Committee indicated a strong understanding of the need for lifelong learning and the contribution it can make to building people's capacity for economic and social participation.
- 2.21 The need for lifelong learning was promoted by organisations concerned with maintaining workforce participation,²⁰ agencies from all spheres of government,²¹ adult learning and University of the Third Age organisations,²² community organisations and individuals.²³ The learning needs mentioned in evidence varied from wanting to feel more confident using computers and ATMs, to subjects that help older people grapple with the meaning of life.²⁴
- 2.22 The sense of achievement to be gained through lifelong learning was demonstrated by the man who sent to the Committee his first letter created after learning to use a computer, saying how he had found it 'mentally stimulating'.²⁵
- 2.23 Evidence to the Committee emphasised the need for wide-ranging opportunities from the informal and opportunistic, to activities that help bridge gaps or open up new experiences and structured learning leading to formal qualifications. In each of these contexts the value of older people passing on their learning from experience was raised. At the same time the need for better articulation of these opportunities was identified, with more emphasis to be laid on the recognition of prior learning and experience.²⁶

19 Reeve P, transcript 20/05/2003, p 518.

20 Australian Industry Group, sub 110 p 6; Australian Council of Trade Unions, sub 107, pp 5-7.

21 Lgov NSW, sub 89, p 11; Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), sub 90, pp 39-40.

22 University of the Third Age (U3A), City of Melbourne Inc, sub 44, p 2; Cross J, transcript 28/04/2003, pp 382-87; Adult Learning Australia Inc., sub 100, pp 1-4.

23 Bertram L, transcript 28/04/2003, p 375.

24 Reeve P, transcript 20/05/2003, pp 518-19; Bertram L, transcript 28/04/2003, p 368; Cross J, transcript 28/04/2003, p 384.

25 Coleman R, sub 190, p 1.

26 Council on the Ageing (COTA), sub 91, pp 25-26; FaCS, sub 90, p 13; Lgov NSW, sub 89, p 11; Bertram L, transcript 28/04/2003, p 375; ACTU, sub 107, p 7; Australian Industry Group, sub 110, p 6.

- 2.24 The critical role of lifelong learning in helping to maintain workforce participation will be covered in Chapter 6 and the need for improving and maintaining financial literacy in Chapter 7.
- 2.25 Initiatives to promote lifelong learning vary across each State and Territory and include partnerships and linkages with educational institutions and private sector employers. A major partner in these activities is the network of University of the Third Age (U3A) organisations.²⁷ The Council on the Ageing (COTA) suggested to the Committee that the Australian Government should place much stronger and explicit policy emphasis on lifelong learning and education for older people.²⁸
- 2.26 The Committee notes that there is a growing interest in lifelong education policy at the national level and that, given the nature and scope of lifelong education, policy development is multi-pronged:
- Research on lifelong learning has been commissioned by the Department of Education, Science and Training and national consultations have sought to gain a better understanding of the needs of adult learners.²⁹
 - In relation to vocational education and training, *Shaping Our Future: Australia's National Strategy for VET 2004-2010*, acknowledges the need to 'balance the focus on training young people for work with the retraining needs of existing and older workers', with greater emphasis on lifelong learning.³⁰
 - The Minister for Education, Science and Training in November 2003, released a discussion paper, titled 'You Can Too: Adult Learning in Australia'. The paper seeks views and recommendations on how governments, business and the wider community can work together to

27 University of the Third Age, Hobart Inc, sub 3, p 1; University of the Third Age Incorporated, Sydney, sub 10, p 1; University of the Third Age, City of Melbourne Incorporated, sub 44, p 5;

28 COTA, sub 91, pp 25-6. COTA's submission was received in November 2003.

29 Research reports commissioned by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) include: Chapman J et al, *Lifelong Learning and Teacher Education*, Executive summary, viewed 6/05/2004, <http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/eippubs/eip03_4/default.htm>; Watson L, *Lifelong Learning in Australia*, viewed 6/05/2004, <http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/eippubs/eip03_13/default.htm>. Information on the consultations may be accessed at <<http://www.dest.gov.au/ucan2/Default.htm>>.

30 Australian National Training Authority, *Australia's National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 2004-2010*, viewed 29/05/2004, <http://www.anta.gov.au/images/publications/national_strategy.txt>, p 3.

support adult learning and to coordinate Australia's efforts for the benefit of all involved.³¹

- 2.27 Information and communications technology is rapidly changing the way we look at and participate in education and training. The Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) is conducting a review into Australia's Future Using Education Technology. The review will examine the current users and providers of education technology as well as examining future applications. A particular focus will be placed on the needs of Indigenous Australians as well as access for remote/regional Australians. This review may be useful if it could be further examined in an ageing context.³²
- 2.28 Educational technology is emerging as an important part of lifelong learning. The Unlimited Potential Programme³³ aims to support more than 75 technology learning centres located in rural and urban areas throughout Australia. The programs objective is to help improve lifelong learning opportunities for disadvantaged Australians by providing people with access to computer technology, education and training irrespective of age, background, education, location or socio-economic status.³⁴
- 2.29 Recent research commissioned by DEST, examined the shifting emphasis of national lifelong learning policy. In the late 1990s focus was on the contribution of lifelong education to the nation's economy. Then on the contribution to the economic well-being of the individual, and most recently, to the notion that lifelong learning also contributes to the social well-being of individuals and the community.³⁵ The Committee considers that all three of these perspectives, together, should inform lifelong learning policy as the Australian population ages.

31 Department of Education, Science and Training, *You Can Too: Adult learning in Australia*, November 2003, p 3.

32 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Australia's Future Using Education Technology*, viewed 28/06/2004, <<http://www.dest.gov.au/afuet/default.htm>>.

33 Developed as a community partnership between Microsoft, the Smith Family, Australian Seniors Computing Clubs, Work Ventures, YarnTeen and the Inspire Foundation.

34 Microsoft Australia, *Unlimited Potential Programme*, viewed 29/06/2004, <<http://www.microsoft.com/australia/corpaffairs/corpcit/community/up.aspx>>.

35 Chapman J, et al, *Lifelong Learning and Teacher Education*, Executive summary, viewed 6/05/2004, <http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/eippubs/eip03_4/default.htm>.

Supporting carers in the community

Older people are encouraged to remain in their own homes for as long as possible rather than be admitted inappropriately into residential care. Informal carers take on the main impact of that care in the community. They provide an invaluable service to the community, with very little recognition.³⁶

- 2.30 Evidence to the Committee shows that some 2.3 million people, family members, friends and neighbours provide unpaid care at home. Of these, an estimated 125,300 primary carers provide help to people aged 65 years and over. In the Northern Territory, for example, around 4,700 people have primary caring responsibilities though this is thought to be much lower than the actual number of carers. In Indigenous communities there may be up to three times the number in the general community given the high rate of morbidity.³⁷

The demands of caring

- 2.31 Carers Australia referred to research which indicates that while care giving can reduce the well being of carers, strong personal and social networks together with greater economic resources can help offset the impacts. Negative effects on wellbeing were more likely for carers aged under 50 and for women. Indigenous carers face the same issues as other carers but with the issues intensified by isolation, poverty, language, lack of services, family breakdown, and cultural confusion.³⁸
- 2.32 The demands of caring are becoming more complex. As families are having children later, an increasing number of women (in particular) are simultaneously caring for children and for ageing parents or other older people. Many carers themselves are ageing so that they find caring more arduous especially if, for example, they are caring for an ageing son or daughter with disabilities, or someone with dementia and challenging behaviours – a trend that may increase in the future as the population ages.³⁹

36 Lusty E, transcript 2/02/2004, p 714.

37 Carers Australia, sub 77, p 1; NT Carers Association Inc, sub 179, p 2; Simmons L, transcript 3/02/2004, p 771.

38 Carers Australia, sub 77, p 8; NT Carers Association Inc, sub 179, p 2; Older Women's Network (Australia) Incorporated, sub 59, p 2.

39 Waverley Council (NSW), sub 73, p4; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *The future supply of informal care 2003 to 2013*, AIHW catalogue no. AGE 32, October 2003, pp 2, 32; Flanagan K, transcript 7/02/2003, p 16.

- 2.33 Other evidence to the Committee pointed to a reluctance to use 'outside' help, whether from outside the family or, in cultures where cultural taboos are involved and/or children feel a strong obligation to personally look after parents, the assistance of people from other cultures.⁴⁰

Future availability of carers

- 2.34 In attempting to model the availability of primary carers in the future, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) concluded that the interplay of factors likely to influence availability is 'substantially more complex than is often thought'. Taking into account the contributions of additional carers and the relationships between primary carers and additional carers increases the complexity. It also highlights the importance of extended informal support networks, which in turn are 'dependent on the availability of relevant formal services and programs and on policies that facilitate broader community support'.⁴¹
- 2.35 Modelling by NATSEM calculated a ratio of older persons needing care (ie, persons aged 65 and over, with a severe or profound disability *and* living in private dwellings) to persons likely to provide care. This ratio projects a fall in the ratio between 2001 and 2031 from 57 primary carers for every 100 persons needing care to 35 carers for every 100 persons (see Figure 2.1). In consequence, by 2031, the percentage of older persons in private dwellings needing care but without a primary carer is projected to grow from 43% (152,000 persons) to 65% (573,000 persons).⁴²
- 2.36 The availability (or lack) of carers can depend on factors specific to some locations. In the Northern Territory and Broken Hill, for example, there is an increasing number of older people without family: single men who may have worked out bush or in the mining towns; couples whose children have moved to the city.⁴³

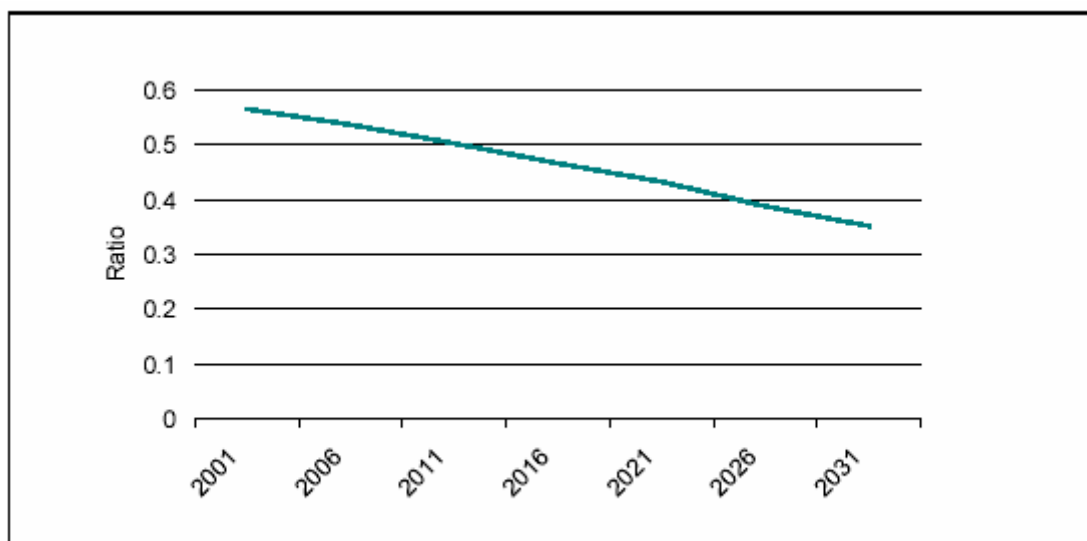
40 Ross I, transcript 4/07/2003, p 659; Waverley Council (NSW), sub 73, p 4; Mahajani S, transcript 3/02/2004, pp 791-2.

41 AIHW, *The future supply of informal care 2003 to 2013*, AIHW catalogue no. AGE 32, October 2003, pp 31-32, 34; Carers Australia, sub 77, p 10; Lusty M, transcript 2/02/2004, p 715.

42 NATSEM, *Who's going to care? Informal care and an ageing population*, pp 30-31.

43 McKell J, transcript 3/02/2004, p 774; Phillips C, transcript 3/02/2004, p 778; Flecknoe-Brown S, transcript 24/02/2004, p 840; Carter A, transcript 24/02/2004, p 848.

Figure 2.1: Projected ratios of carers to persons aged 65 and over with a severe or profound disability and living in private dwellings, Australia 2001-2031



Note: only includes persons in private dwellings

Source: NATSEM, *Who's going to care? Informal care and an ageing population*, p30.

- 2.37 NATSEM also noted recent research indicating that the supply of carers may be limited due to people's desire to remain in the workforce.⁴⁴
- 2.38 In light of evidence on the ageing of the population, the need to increase workforce participation and the growing number of people caring for both young children and elderly relatives, the Committee is concerned that it might not be possible to continue to be caring communities to the same extent as now.
- 2.39 Carers wanting to return to the workforce are supported by the Transition to Work program. This program is available to carers who have been unemployed for at least two years and aims to assess skills and identify training needs of carers. Arrangements for the Carer Payment also encourage continuing participation in work, study or training. Recipients can be involved in these activities for up to twenty hours a week without their access to the Carer Payment being affected. Ms Austin suggested that the twenty hour limit may need to be reviewed.⁴⁵

44 NATSEM, *Who's going to care? Informal care and an ageing population*, p 10.

45 Centrelink, *Returning to work when you stop being a carer*, viewed 6/08/2004, <http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/individuals/carers_work.htm>; Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre, *transition to work*, viewed 6/08/2004, <<http://www.carernse.asn.au/infosupport/facts/Other/fstransitionwork.htm>>; Austin J, transcript 7/03/2003, pp 255-256.

- 2.40 Comparisons were drawn in evidence between the different attitudes and policy responses to parenting and child care on the one hand, and caring for the elderly which appears to be regarded as 'a private matter [to be] managed within families'. In this context, the attention of the Committee was drawn to the need for attitudinal changes in workplaces to allow flexibilities for people with caring responsibilities (see further, chapter 6).⁴⁶ Another area of comparison related to elder abuse: physical, mental and financial. While there are now mandatory reporting requirements in each State and Territory for child abuse, there are no similar arrangements for elder abuse (see further 'Ageing with dignity').⁴⁷
- 2.41 Attention was repeatedly drawn to the importance of carer payments and carer support programs such as the Carer Respite Program, and the support provided by Community Aged Care Packages and Home and Community Care services. Even so, the adequacy of these measures was questioned:
- ...we urge you not to fall into the trap of considering family carers as an unlimited and free work force. They are there and they are happy to provide care to family members, but they need support.⁴⁸
- 2.42 The Committee notes that Australian Government funding and the range of supports have been substantially increased in recent years. In the 2004-05 Budget, funding is being provided for the development of a quality assurance framework for community care programs including the National Respite for Carers Program. The carer allowance is being extended to people who provide at least 20 hours of daily-personal-care per week, but do not live with the person for whom they care. It is estimated that this will provide assistance to an additional 13,270 carers.
- 2.43 At the same time, there is a danger that as the range of support services increases they are poorly integrated, adding to the confusion and frustration already experienced by many carers.⁴⁹
- 2.44 The Committee is concerned that there is very little in the way of training for carers. Some training is provided by Carers Australia but availability varies considerably from state to state. Alzheimers Australia also provides

46 NT Carers Association Inc, sub 77, p 10.

47 Mahajani S, transcript, 3/02/2004, p 791; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Child Protection Australia 1996-97*, Appendix 4, pp 80-81, viewed 13/07/2004, <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/welfare/cpa96-7/>>.

48 National Aged Care Alliance, sub 88, p 6; Halliday G, transcript 3/02/2004, p 769.

49 Malak A, transcript 7/03/2003, p 259; *Budget Measures 2004-05*, Budget Paper No.2, p 160, viewed 20/07/2004, <<http://www.budget.gov.au/2004-05/bp2/download/bp2.pdf>>.

training in dementia care. The Committee notes that Carers Australia is developing a training program for new carers and the NT Carers Association Inc is developing a training program for Indigenous carers. Another promising move is that the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is beginning to direct more funding to ageing research, with a current study assessing how well health and community services support people with dementia and reduce the burden on their carers.⁵⁰

- 2.45 Indigenous carers in communities in Central Australia may not get the support possible from such services and initiatives. In a town camp it is almost impossible to get help at home so informal carers carry the load. At Utopia where the traditional custom of taking care of each other continues, the people who need support 'are the grandmothers and grandfathers who are taking care of the 30- to 40- year-old aimless people' in the community.⁵¹
- 2.46 Communities in various ways are also putting in place supports for carers. For example, providing day care for dementia patients; support groups for carers; and Legacy and the local RSL helping to care for war widows and single returned soldiers. The NT Carers Association Inc has demonstrated that innovative and culturally appropriate approaches to support for remote Indigenous carers are possible. The Responsive Respite Program involves 'two Toyota troop carriers with a trailer and camping gear going to communities' for a month's stay. In addition to respite, education and information are provided, and carers or their families are taken to ceremonies, camping, fishing or on back-to-country camp outs.⁵²
- 2.47 The Committee concludes that appropriate support is critical to maintaining the willingness of people to be carers and the quality of care they provide. The development of quality assurance system for community care programs, and the development of training for carers should both contribute to better support for carers.
- 2.48 Increasing reliance on care in the community makes it all the more imperative that the proposed quality assurance system for community care programs is developed and put in place as a matter of priority. The Committee considers that the quality assurance system must address the

50 Jones D, transcript 24/02/2004, p 858; Simmons L, transcript 3/02/2004, p 772; National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), sub 130, p 3.

51 Dennis L, transcript 2/02/2004, p 729-30; Kunoth-Monks R, transcript 2/02/2004, p 737.

52 Kennedy M, transcript 23/02/2004, p 820; Waverley Council (NSW), sub 73, p 4; Vickers W, transcript 24/02/2004, pp 859-61; Simmons L, transcript 3/02/2004, p 771.

support provided to carers both directly by the National Carer Respite Program and through the provision of Community Care Packages.

Summing up

- 2.49 Positive ageing is very much related to the creation of age friendly communities that facilitate people's participation and involvement in the community.
- 2.50 The Committee was impressed by the role some local governments and communities are playing in reassessing their community environments in light of the aging of the population. Many are realising that what is good for older people is good for the community: improving 'liveability', brokering more responsive transport arrangements, improving information and how it may be accessed, and exploring ways to integrate funding, coordinate services and care, encouraging lifelong learning, and enhancing living environments.
- 2.51 Involvement in the community assists older people to maintain social links, stay physically active and stay mentally, emotionally and physically healthy. Older Australians who are actively engaged in their community and have purpose and meaning in their life are healthier on average and may be less at risk of entering residential aged care.
- 2.52 While the value of lifelong learning is actively encouraged in many communities, the Australian Government has been slow to provide support. Recent initiatives are promising but are still in their early stages.
- 2.53 The Committee concludes that appropriate support is critical to maintaining the willingness of people to be carers and the quality of care they provide – especially as the demands of caring are becoming more complex
- 2.54 The development of a quality assurance system for community care programs, and the development of training for carers should both contribute to better support for carers.
- 2.55 Increasing reliance on care in the community makes it all the more imperative that the proposed quality assurance system for community care programs is developed and put in place as a matter of priority. The Committee considers that the quality assurance system must address the support provided to carers both directly by the National Carer Respite Program and through the provision of Community Care Packages.

Conclusion 1

- 2.56 **The Committee concludes that the Department of Health and Ageing should ensure that the proposed quality assurance system for Australian Government funded community care programs covers the support provided to carers both directly by the National Carer Respite Program and through the provision of Community Care Packages.**

