

Two important strategies that have transformed aged care services in Australia – A Report

Introduction

According to a recent survey in 2016, around 15% of the Australian population belongs to the age group of over 65 years. Out of this population, only 7% of the people are receiving the benefit of residential care home services. The Australian government has taken outstanding initiatives in the recent past to make provisions for new and improved aged care services and to ensure that these services are accessible by every Australian citizen. The government has provided several subsidies for both home and residential care services based on individual requirements and financial status of the patients. However, with the introduction of aged care services, the healthcare requirements of the aged have also changed dramatically including their demographic profiles and care preferences (Khadka et al., 2019).

This report serves to analyze two important issues related to aged care services in Australia and steps taken by the Australian government to specifically address these issues. One of the important aspects of aged care is for people to be able to retire whenever they want knowing that they will be supported socially and financially. In order to make this possible, the Living Longer, Living Better initiative has been formulated by the government that supports both patients and carers catering to their individual requirements. Another issue faced by Australian citizens is that the special needs LGBTI population does not have access to services that are specific and appropriate for them. The National LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Strategy addresses this gap in providing care and aims to consider the needs of this population for aged care services.

Living Longer, Living Better (LLL) Initiative

The LLL initiative came into effect on 26th June, 2013, and it aimed at providing care and support to aged people at patients' homes and residential care homes. The focus of this initiative was on providing greater control to patients and their families, and providing additional support to caregivers. According to this initiative, the aged population considered is people above the age of 65 or 50 in the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (National Seniors Australia, n.d.). This initiative gives freedom to aged people and their families to invest in services that are most relevant and applicable for them. It also encourages businesses to deliver products and services that are suitable for the aged and therefore, remain in the competition (Change2020, 2018).

The LLL initiative allows Australians to have a long and healthy retirement period that is active, productive, and happy. Some of the provisions under this initiative include an integrated home support program, home care packages, consumer-directed care, respite and financial support to carers, and provision of residential aged care facilities. It has also allocated funds for providing increased health connections, supporting research, establishing financial authorities for aged care, enhancing funding

instruments for the aged care, and strengthening the aged care workforce (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012a).

This initiative covers several different aspects of the lives of aged care workers and retired people, and aims to provide relevant services to them for their financial and healthcare needs. It is a \$3.7 billion initiative of which \$1.2 billion has been allocated for increasing subsidies and offering viability supplements to healthcare providers. It has planned to build several home care and residential care institutions for the aged so that they can have access to quality healthcare services provided by the Australian government. One of its important models of care is Consumer-Directed Care (CDC) which allows the aged patients and their family members extended freedom to choose their healthcare services, delivery methods, and payment options (National Seniors Australia, n.d.).

The LLLB initiative has also allocated \$54.8 million as financial support for caregivers of the aged population so that their financial requirements are adequately met and they are motivated to provide the best quality care to their patients. This will allow carers to easily access the National Respite for Carers Program and the National Carer Recognition Framework that is already provided by the Australian government. Additionally, it has provided funds and facilities for counseling sessions with carers and provided them with extended flexibility in the services that are offered by the government. The initiative has also organized a regional network of carer support centres so that caregivers and patients can be connected to each other seamlessly (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012).

National LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex) Ageing and Aged Care Strategy 2013

The LGBTI, that constitutes 11% of the Australian population, is a vulnerable population in the country whose healthcare services and, specifically, aged care services have suffered considerably in the past. Apart from their healthcare issues, they have faced social isolation, discrimination, and family rejection that have led to the development of several emotional and mental health conditions in this population. They have very different psychological, social, cultural, and care needs that need to be addressed by their healthcare service providers and caregivers. Hence, the National LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Strategy aims to provide distinct care services for the LGBTI population so that their aged care needs can be adequately met (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012b).

As per the strategy, the LGBTI population will have equitable access to all the relevant aged care services offered by the Australian government. They will be able to access healthcare service providers and carers who have specific expertise in providing aged care services to the LGBTI population. Thus, this will help in building a community of LGBTI-specific carers so that patients belonging to this population can receive appropriate referrals for aged care services. The language used in the content of aged care services programs will be altered to include all citizens of Australia regardless of their sexual orientation and preferences. Special consideration will be given to the LGBTI people who are geographically isolated and cannot access quality healthcare services relevant to their needs (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012b).

Several funds and grants have been initiated by the Australian government as part of this strategy to benefit the LGBTI population. The Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) and the Healthy Ageing Grants Fund have been extended to include the LGBTI population, and the National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACPP) has promoted advocating aged care services to the LGBTI population to the maximum extent possible. Additionally, support has been provided to community care and aged care service providers so that they can provide targeted care to the LGBTI population. Details about ethical standards and legal protection pertaining to this population have been shared with care providers. The LGBTI population has been designated as a special needs group in aged care reforms and home care packages so that care providers can designate specific carers and resources to meet their needs (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012b).

Conclusion

Although Australian healthcare has come a long way in delivering quality healthcare services to all, it still has several aspects to consider in terms of resources and services. Two of the important healthcare initiatives of the Australian government have been described in this report and there are many others that have been proposed. However, the implementation of these initiatives on an extremely large scale is challenging and there are many patients who do not have access to quality aged care services. Despite this, the Australian government's efforts are commendable in formulating initiatives and creating extensive networks between healthcare facilities, carers, and patients.

References

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