North West Ageing and Aged Care Strategy

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‘We need to encourage people to age passionately, curiously, creatively and magnificently.’
Margaret Manning, The Joy of Ageing Graciously

‘A society that does not value its older people denies its roots and endangers its future. Let us strive to enhance their capacity to support themselves for as long as possible and, when they cannot do so anymore, to care for them.’
President Nelson Mandela

Acknowledgements

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Disclaimer

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4.1.3 Community and Home Based Care Supports

Community and home based care supports includes any type of home support, assistance or care that enables aged residents to continue living independently in their own homes. It also includes the support given to older people at day centres and through crisis care (both accommodation and emergency relief). According to both the WHO and the UN, maintaining independence and having access to the services that allow older people to remain autonomous and at home for as long as possible are strong determinants of an older person's ability to remain socially connected and to age well and in place (WHO, 2007 and UN, 1991). According to the National Rural Health Alliance (2013), older people in rural and remote communities are more likely to use community and home based care supports than residential aged care. Certainly, the expressed need in the North West Region was for increased appropriate community and home based care supports, not residential aged care.

In Western Australia, community and home based care supports for older people are delivered primarily through a service provider delivering the HACC Programme. Either through referral by a service provider or self-referral, older people are accessed for eligibility for the HACC Programme through a RAS. In the North West Region, a range of committed service providers deliver HACC services. HACC services are designed to maximise an older person's independence and typically include assistance with – domestic care; everyday household tasks; meals and feeding; personal care; participation in social activities and transport to keep up with personal administration activities such as shopping, banking etc. HACC service providers quite often also provide centre based day care facilities and day respite services. Across the North West Region, the HACC Programme is vital in ensuring that older persons receive quality care, remain independent and stay connected to community. In smaller towns, the HACC Programme is often the only means by which older people can participate in social and recreational activities and access transport services. Finally, the staff who deliver the HACC Programme (and other personnel working with older people) have reported that they quite often assist older people with personal administration tasks. This is often not included in their job description and can become challenging due to privacy issues. It is interesting to note that many older Aboriginal people are assisted by a specially appointed staff person from the Aboriginal Corporations of which they are a member to provide HACC type services and so do not at all rely upon or access formal HACC services.

EPIS in the Pilbara and KACS in the Kimberley are both exemplary models of service delivery of the HACC Programme in remote / Aboriginal communities, operating through what is fundamentally a 'hub and spoke' model. These service providers rely heavily on block funding to be able to effectively continue and, a CDC approach (currently part of the proposed aged care reforms) would render the delivery of their services no longer feasible, impacting adversely on the level and quality of care older people are able to access in these communities. Home modifications (for example, fitting rails and/or ramps) are undertaken through a WACHS Population Health Unit, private home owners and/or the WA Housing Authority. Mobility aids and assistive technology and equipment that allow older people to continue living at home and carry out daily tasks are procured through a WACHS Population Health Unit or Independent Living Centres Australia. Independent Living Centres visits the North West Region on a quarterly basis. However, the remote and isolated location of the North West Region makes procuring mobility aids and assistive technology difficult. Across the North West Region, home nursing services are provided by Silverchain, WACHS, AMS's and some private GP's. It is worth noting the significant and pertinent role of sobering up shelters, women's shelters and emergency relief services in supporting older people across the North West Region. These types of services provide vital support to older people who have a mental illness; substance abuse issues; face difficult living conditions at home (for example, overcrowding); and for those who have no permanent residence and/or are facing homelessness. Whilst the role of formal community and home based care supports is vital in allowing older people to remain in their own homes and independent for as long as possible, the positive role of strong community connections needs to be revisited, acknowledged and strategically nurtured. An excellent example of this is the town of Wyndham in the Kimberley. Despite its remote location and subsequent lack of services, older people here report receiving high levels of support which they attribute as the result of a strong and connected community, and the commitment of Joongari House and Juniper to work alongside the community to assist older people within the community. Finally, not to be disregarded is the significant role family members play as both formal and informal carers for their older family members, in most cases this task falls to a spouse who is quite often also elderly, or the children of an older person.