

SATURDAY Issue 70

## **Funding alone will not solve aged care sustainability problems: Catherine Daley**

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*Current models in aged care are unsustainable and inequitable, says the CEO of home care provider integrated living – could integrating aged care more fully into the healthcare sector be the solution?*

Australia will not achieve the vision of a sustainable aged care sector within the next three years unless there are significant changes to the ways in which the Government considers expanding access to primary care and greater access to Medicare, and providers reimagine their business, operating, and care models, according to Catherine Daley.

At a Government level, the National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA) 2020-2025 between the Australian Government and all States and Territories commit to improving health outcomes for Australians by providing 'better coordinated and joined up care in the community and ensuring the future sustainability of Australia's health system'.

The reforms focus on health literacy, prevention and wellbeing, flexible ways for Government to pay for value and outcomes, joint planning and funding at a local level, enhanced health data and cohesive health technology.

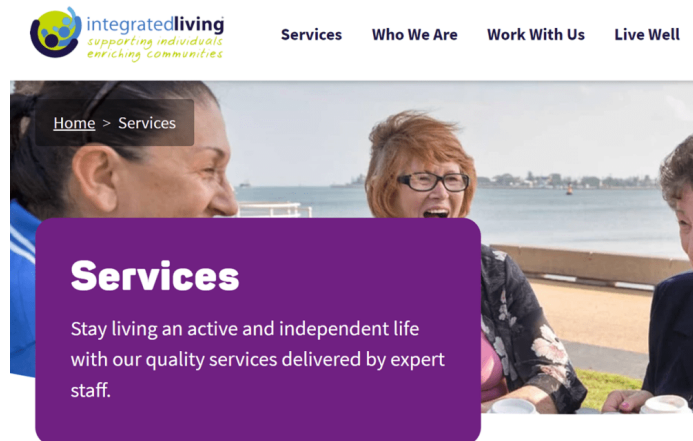
Catherine says it has been positive to see the Strengthening Medicare changes and the release of the [National Digital Health Strategy](#) and there is an opportunity for more of these services to occur within a community setting.

## Newly announced clarity of roles and responsibilities across the sector

[The recently released statement](#) on 'Where health care meets aged care, and the Clarification on the roles and responsibilities for the delivery of health care for people receiving aged care service' define the place of home care providers in the broader ecosystem.

"Essentially, we meet our roles now however have greater capability to meet the six reform goals, especially given our place within community settings," Catherine said.

In her current position for 12 years, Catherine is spearheading a new pilot program designed to test these reform goals and create a wrap-around model of care based on preventative health and wellness delivery.



The CEO says this program could be a game-changer for both the health and aged care sectors, particularly from a funding optimisation perspective.

“Many senior Australians do not use aged care, and this is disproportionate in rural, regional and remote communities where access is further restricted especially to allied health practitioners, Registered Nurses, General Practitioners and specialists,” she told SATURDAY.

“Further bold changes in preventative health investment will go a long way to solving the disproportionate spend on acute care. With an ageing population, a shrinking workforce and taxpayer base and current business models that are unviable and failing to attract investment, the CEO said it is clear that adding more funding alone to the current aged care model will not solve the sector’s broader sustainability problems or cover the increased costs of the proposed regulatory reforms and standards.



## **Get rid of duplication and waste**

“A sustainable sector is critical,” she stated.

“Aged care and the broader health ecosystem is complex, and we must collectively move the sector forward.”

**“While we all work hard to provide the best services possible, providers will need to act now to ensure their viability for a reformed sector with significant adaptations within the next three years.”**

Instead, Catherine argues that increasing the integration of aged care into the health ecosystem could be the key to the sustainable delivery of services.

“This could avoid the wastage and duplication of effort and utilise funding that is already available within the broader ecosystem,” she said.

“We know those accessing the health and hospital system could receive services within their communities and a big push in the last Federal Budget to strengthen Medicare, and Primary Care, Government is focused on this goal.”

## **Consumer contributions and more flexible funding required**

The CEO also points to more equitable funding; to match current costs, and increased contributions from those who have the capacity to pay, plus improvements to current services, workforce redesign and better management of chronic health as areas that should be of key focus for the sector.

“What we must avoid is stifled innovation,” she underlined.

“Innovation is key to our future and as a sector we must continue to use new technologies to improve the care we can provide to older Australians, particularly those in isolated regional, rural and remote communities or where there are thin markets. This requires more flexible funding models to support responsive preventative healthcare.”

In addition, Catherine says aged care providers need to partner together and share their learnings.

“Working collaboratively across the sector is the best way for providers to transition to more sustainable impacts in the communities where we operate,” she summed up.

**“At integratedliving, we have a clear vision and purpose and we are committed to partnering with clients, communities, aligned providers right across the sector, Government, and other stakeholders to shape how we can ensure preventative health in this country.”**



### **Aids and Sensors**

Personal alarms, fall detectors  
and Find-Me GPS locators.

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## **Catherine's advice to other leaders navigating the aged care reforms:**

- Redefine vision and strategy – form your own strategic view and plan for how you intend to operate, including your rationale. Whether this is for new or expanded markets or services, ensure you build in your key success factors, the capabilities and resourcing required to be successful. Invest in innovation, and importantly, a workplace culture that is pragmatic.
- Understand your organisation and culture – it is essential to have an empowered executive team with the influence to affect the agreed change:
  - Understand your current workforce and the new skills and capabilities required,
  - Identify and build sustainable partnerships across a broad range of networks,
  - Understand the value of collaboration,
  - Develop a framework to support innovation and potentially, if you have the resources, establish an innovation centre?
- Client experience – understand the experience along the care pathways and the ‘pain points’:

- Redesign experiences that create value and are meaningful, find some ‘quick wins’ while working on longer term solutions,
- Integrate care pathways through partnerships and alliances,
- Use co-design principles to a person-centred approach,
- Support broader community forums and social networks that offer further insights.
- Built environment - where you have a built environment following person-centred design principles. Be open to the changes in demographics, technology and care pathways. In our case we look to opportunities to shift care to the home.
- Process and operations – employ process optimisation to establish a baseline to track and measure change:
  - Ensure cross-functional teams are involved in these exercises to capture implications,
  - Follow a data-driven approach to redesign, implement and monitor for effectiveness,
  - Increase the use of digital processes, tools and people skills to create increased productivity and operational efficiencies,
  - Ensure training occurs at a multi-disciplinary level, and support collaborative approaches,
  - Explore simulation and emerging technologies.
- Data and analytics – adopt principles of health interoperability and terminology such as SNOMED CT–AU, AMT and FHIR:
  - Explore your set up of electronic medical record to capture and connect the extensive personal health data,
  - Use the data to identify trends and priority areas for practice improvement or use cases.
- Technology – invest in an integration platform with a focus on API management and plug and play capabilities:
  - Ensure gateways and infrastructure to support Internet of Things (IoT) enablement as part of broader technology strategy and adopt IoT interoperability standards to ensure easy exchange of data,
  - Continually assess and evolve your cyber security, identity and access management and continuous authentication mechanisms focused on managing risk whilst creating a more secure and seamless customer experience.
- Compliance and regulation:
  - Improve performance, quality and safety outcomes, capability, and culture through regulatory stewardship,

- Continue to invest in ensuring you meet regulatory and sector-wide reforms,
- Governance, risk and compliance models are fit for purpose,
- Provide appropriate guidelines and reporting frameworks.

**Catherine will be a panellist at the 2024 LEADERS SUMMIT, 19-20 March in Sydney, discussing access to innovative wellbeing services and improving the quality of life of older Australians. To register, click [here](#).**