



# Older adult's experience of home care in Australia: A qualitative study

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# Session outline

- Background to project
- Methodology
- Findings
- Implications for home care practice



# Background

- Home care received by over 1 million Australians (Tune, 2017)
- \$4.32 billion for the 2015/16 year in Australia, increasing 22% over the past five years (AIHW, 2017a)
- Recent policy changes have increased demand on home care services
  - A wait list of over 100,000 for home care packages (AIHW, 2017b)
- Introduction of consumer directed care seen as mutually beneficial - supporting choice and control of older adults and financially sustainable
- Little evidence to guide implementation
- Unforeseen outcomes
- What is consumers experience?



# Methodology

- Qualitative study
- Recruitment – convenience sampling
  - Advertising using social media platforms, online newsletters, announcements at support groups and posters/flyers in the community
- Semi-structured in-depth interviews with 11 households/14 participants (3 spouses) of home care
- Eligibility
  - 65 years or older
  - Receiving home support services for at least 3 months (including domestic assistance, personal care, social support, meal preparation and assistance with shopping)
  - Living in the community
  - Excluded if only received medical services such as nursing
- Thematic analysis followed methods of Braun and Clarke (2006)



# Findings – Participant sample

- 14 participants (11 interviews, with three spouses)
- Average age 77 years (range 68-92), 9 female and 5 male
- Each recipient of care received their care from a different service provider (11 different service providers)
- Hours of support per fortnight
  - 1-5 hours (n=9)
  - 25+ hours (n=2)
- Domestic assistance (n = 11) Personal care (n = 2)
- Social support (n = 1) Food preparation (n = 2)
- Shopping (n = 3) Other assistance (n = 2)



# Findings – Two major themes

What makes it  
work in the  
home

When choice  
isn't choice



# What makes it work in the home

- Quality of work in the home – staff characteristics
  - Efficient
  - Professional
  - Respecting values
  - Attention to detail
  - Empathetic
  - Willingness to help where needed/flexibility
- Both positive and negative experiences

*I don't want someone who talks all the time  
or sticky beaks or asks you questions -  
Jocelyn*

*And things like washing the curtains and  
things like that...that need to be  
done....the hour and a half really only  
allows them to do the immediate  
necessities – Annabel*

*She was cleaning and she had a bit of time and everything else and she  
noticed there was a second toilet, so she just went in and cleaned the second  
toilet - Loretta*



# What makes it work in the home

- Continuity of staff

*But they do try to keep it on a regular basis, so you don't have to get up and tell everybody where the Windex is and that...and you feel more comfortable with them too - Annabel*

*I'm not having to deal with a different lady each time. That would be, oh that would be so tricky. And such a waste of time to, you know, each time I have to tell someone, you know, where all the cleaning products are and all that - Elle*

- Timing of services

*The friends I've got either run businesses or are working, they want to do things on a Saturday and that's when there's various things on that we want to go to. I can't get out of the house until about 11 o'clock, by the time I had a shower and had half an hour's rest – Stella*





# What makes it work in the home

- Social connection important for some

*It means a lot to me, because if I wouldn't have this, it would be a very lonely life. I haven't got a – hardly any friends left in my age group – Meredith*

*Well she will come in and she'll sit down and talk to you. And I think now come on, I'm paying, not that it's a great deal, I'm paying for an hours' work, I want an hours' work done - Jocelyn*

- Impact on privacy and security

*Some people don't like home care because they feel, oh it's people intruding in their life, or into their home and things like that. But, you know, I never knock any help back -  
Loretta*



# When choice isn't choice

- Valued increased choice
- Lack of information about packages/services available
- Confusion and frustration with navigating My Aged Care processes
- Inadequate service provided or too long to receive services

*..and now you have to ring My Aged Care, you've got to have an assessment by the aged care assessment team, you have one or two or more assessments by the service you go to. It's ridiculous...But each time he needed something, I had to go through the whole process again - Rita*

*So, I think you've got to be savvy, you've got to know what – what's out there. And I think by going to the carers meetings you do learn these things - Joan*

*So the woman who did it, she said, um, she gave me a list of the people who would help me and she suggested that I do [service provider] so I don't know whether she had half shares in them or not - Jocelyn*



# When choice isn't choice

- Restrictions of service provider guidelines
  - Inconsistency and lack of flexibility in services provided
- Poor communication
- Changing service providers

*Well they're not allowed to shift heavy things or get up on chairs or something, or lift things - Meredith*

*Ah, no, I would like to think that I had – the lady in charge rang up, and she said she'd do an assessment over the phone and all she's said, "Is there anything we can do to help you?" Well, that's not what I call an assessment – Jocelyn*

*But it took three months, 90-something days...to get the money out of the other provider. They're supposed to hand the money over under in 60 days I think it is and we went till three months and probably 20 phone calls - Joan*



# Recommendations from participants

- Quality assurance mechanisms
- More information
  - Transparency of costs
  - Advisor role
  - Clear information about what is and isn't provided
- Continuity in staff

*I would like to think that sometimes someone would come and talk to you and discuss what's happening and what - like you're asking now what I thought for the future, I'd like somebody to do that, well, that doesn't happen – Jocelyn*

*There would be a really big opening for somebody to set themselves up as an advisor of the situation - Joan*



# Implications for practice

- Choice is often not translating into practice
- Consumers are changing service providers
- Ease of access to information – need for support in navigating the system
- Enhance quality assurance mechanisms
  - Feedback addressed
  - Ongoing quality mechanisms
- Service guidelines and procedures – what can change to increase flexibility and service quality?
- Supporting home care workers – continuity of staff



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Thank you

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