

Pre-Budget Submission

Cottage Respite Proposal

About HammondCare

Established in the 1930s, HammondCare is an independent Christian charity specialising in dementia care, palliative care, rehabilitation and older persons' mental health services.

HammondCare is acknowledged as Australia's leading dementia-specific service provider and is dedicated to research and supporting people who are financially disadvantaged. HammondCare's mission is to improve quality of life for people in need, regardless of their circumstances.

We currently operate more than 1,300 residential aged care places across New South Wales and Victoria. We also provide Special Care Programs for people displaying severe behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia. On any given day, HammondCare provides home care to more than 4,500 people. Our HammondCare At Home support older people, people living with dementia and palliative care needs, along with respite and counselling for carers. HammondCare's Dementia Centre is recognised in Australia and internationally for its high quality research, consultancy, training and conferences in the area of best-practice dementia care.

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What is cottage respite?

Cottage respite is a block-funded service provided through the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) that provides overnight respite care in a dedicated cottage facility. Respite cottages are commonly run out of converted family homes in the community or cottage-style facilities on state government land.

As with many CHSP service types, a range of models can fit within the guidelines for cottage respite. According to the Department of Health's (DOH) CHSP program manual, cottage respite services "[provide] overnight care delivered in a cottage-style respite facility or community setting other than in the home of the carer, care recipient or host family. Service providers are required to structure services in such a way that allows them to be as responsive as possible to requests from carers for short-term or non-ongoing respite" (DOH, 2018). They are usually run by community organisations, aged care organisations and carer support organisations, and may be co-located with day services.

What do we know about existing cottage respite services?

Like many CHSP programs, it is difficult to obtain a comprehensive picture on the state of cottage respite services throughout Australia due to a lack of data and potential inconsistencies in self-reporting. However, much can be determined from available data.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), cottage respite services supported 3,857 clients, providing more than a million CHSP output hours at a total cost of \$35.7 million in 2017-18 (AIHW, 2018). It is difficult to determine exactly how many respite cottages there are throughout Australia. The AIHW's Aged Care Service Information September 2018 report indicates that there are 76 respite cottages providing overnight community respite at a provider location with Commonwealth funding, however this list does not appear to be comprehensive (AIHW, 2018). According to the Aged Care Financing Authority (ACFA), during 2016-17, there were 98 providers of cottage respite throughout Australia (ACFA, 2018).

While cottage respite may appear to be a costly option, these costs must be considered in light of the benefits they provide and potential system savings they can deliver.

What are the benefits of cottage respite?

There is consistent evidence that consumers strongly value cottage respite services and regularly prefer it to other forms of respite. Recent research conducted by Carers Australia has identified a "high demand" for cottage-style respite, while increasing the supply of cottage-style accommodation offering overnight respite is the reform "most favoured" by carers and consumers

in contrast to residential care home settings (Carers Australia, 2018). Services supporting carers to access planned and emergency respite, such as Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres (CRCCs), also call for more respite cottages.

According to Carers Australia, there are many benefits of cottage respite services. Cottage respite:

- Feels more normal than residential respite in an aged care home.
- Offers dedicated respite care, so there is a known number of beds and respite clients are not competing with people looking for permanent care and accommodation.
- Suits many carers who prefer to have one or two nights of respite more regularly, rather than blocks of respite.
- Can take pressure off aged care homes that have competing high demands from consumers seeking permanent care and those seeking respite care.
- Is commonly used multiple times by the same consumers, promoting continuity of care and relationships of trust.

Alzheimer's WA reiterates the benefits of cottage-style respite, particularly for people living with dementia and lower clinical-care needs, since these services offer a "more flexible and acceptable service within a more familiar and homely environment" (Alzheimer's WA, 2018). In contrast, more conventional residential respite often results in ongoing challenges for both the consumer and provider. According to Alzheimer's WA, residential care home providers express apprehension in keeping respite rooms routinely open as they consider them less financially viable in contrast to having a room occupied by a permanent resident. Furthermore, residential home staff report increasing workloads and difficulties in introducing respite clients into their new environments and systems, given procedures are primarily designed for assessing and admitting permanent residents. For a respite client living with dementia, transitioning from a familiar home setting in to a large scale residential home or secure dementia care unit can be incredibly unsettling and disruptive. Respite clients living with dementia are also commonly placed in environments with residents experiencing much greater cognitive impairments than their own. These factors, in addition to the client's general loss of autonomy and choice can lead to a negative experience for their respite stay.

A number of other submissions to the recent Aged Care Financing Authority (ACFA) consultation on respite for older Australians stressed that there is a preference for smaller, homelike cottage-style respite care for people with special needs including people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds as well as people living with dementia (ACFA, 2018).

"It's so personalised care. Individualised attention. High staff ratio to clients. Lovely almost rural location. Feels like a home not a facility. She slips back into her normal routine at home very easily."

Carer of a respite cottage guest

What is HammondCare's experience with respite cottages?

HammondCare runs two respite cottages in NSW: Lucinda Cottage in Northern Sydney and Jean Marion Cottage on the Central Coast. Both cottages are refurbished suburban houses with normal, domestic kitchens, living spaces, bedrooms and backyards, providing a home away from home in a non-institutional setting. Each guest has their own bedroom, some bedrooms have ensuites while the main bathroom facilities are shared.

Each cottage provides planned and emergency overnight respite for up to 10 consecutive nights, and is open seven days a week. They are both able to support up to five guests at a time, enabling a high staff ratio and personally tailored care.

The target groups for Lucinda and Jean Marion Cottages are carers of frail older people and people with dementia, including those living with dementia and changed behaviours. Around three quarters of cottage guests have a diagnosis of dementia and our experience confirms that the small-scale and highly personalised care setting is particularly well suited to people living with dementia.

"What they're used to at home we try to make sure continues here so there's no disruption to that pattern."

Respite cottage manager

What evidence is there on the effectiveness of these respite cottages?

Both of HammondCare's respite cottages have a significant positive impact on the lives of the people who use them. They regularly receive compliments from carers who have used them and evaluations have demonstrated high levels of satisfaction. In 2015, HammondCare interviewed carers who had used one of its two respite cottages on more than one occasion between October 2012 and November 2014 as part of an evaluation study (Poulos and Birch, 2016). The study's findings strongly align with those identified by Carers Australia and Alzheimer's WA: the overwhelming majority of carers using cottage respite consider the service has helped them continue caring for their loved one at home (Alzheimer's WA 2018; Carers Australia 2018). Those carers who were supporting someone who had since moved permanently into residential care were asked about the extent to which their use of cottage respite had delayed the need for permanent residential care. More than three quarters (77.6 per cent) felt that their use of a respite cottage had delayed entry to residential care by months or even years (Poulos and Birch, 2016).

"When [carer of respite cottage guest] came to pick her mother up her whole demeanour would change...relaxed and much happier."

Carer of a respite cottage guest

The features of cottage respite they most appreciated included the small size and high staff ratio, the personalised care and attention and the homely atmosphere (Poulos and Birch, 2016). Almost nine in 10 carers who had used residential respite care as well as a respite cottage said they preferred cottage respite (Poulos and Birch, 2016).

The reasons carers gave for this preference included:

- The cottage environment was not like a nursing home.
- Cottage respite felt like home.
- The quality of care.
- The small size of the cottage.
- The personalised care.
- The care recipient like staying at the cottage.

"[Guest name] liked going there. When asked by the staff if he would come back, his response was, 'I know when I'm on a good thing!'"

Care of a respite cottage guest

What is the cost effectiveness of cottage respite?

HammondCare's study of its two cottage respite services included a cost benefit analysis which indicates that these services can generate significant savings for government. The analysis showed that the average estimated delay in the need for permanent entry to residential care among consumers who had used respite cottages on more than one occasion, was 1.03 years (Poulos and Birch, 2016). It found that, even when factoring in the costs of other home care services, this delayed entry to residential care represented a net saving to government of \$27,469 per cottage respite user each year (Poulos and Birch, 2016). This shows that cottage respite has the ability to generate significant savings to government while effectively meeting consumers' needs.

The operating costs of respite cottages are more than offset by the significant benefits they deliver to carers and care recipients alike, as well as the savings they generate by helping to delay permanent entry to residential aged care.

Why are more respite cottages needed?

Increases in the supply of home care services on their own will not succeed in meeting the goal to support more older people to remain living in their own homes longer. They must also be accompanied by additional investment in respite services.

Recent research conducted by Carers Australia indicates that residential respite services are unable to meet demand. Three quarters of the carer support services surveyed reported a high or very high demand for emergency respite, while nearly nine in 10 reported high or very high demand for planned respite (Carers Australia, 2018). At the same time, around two thirds of surveyed carer support organisations said it was either difficult or very difficult to access both planned and emergency respite. Tellingly, the biggest barrier to residential respite identified by the survey was the low availability of services (Carers Australia, 2018). ACFA's report on respite for aged care recipients also found that there were widespread concerns about the availability of all forms of respite, particularly cottage-style respite and appropriate respite for carers of people living with dementia (ACFA, 2018).

The work of Carers Australia and submissions to ACFA consistently show that cottage respite is favoured by care recipients and carers, and is well suited to providing tailored care to individuals from recognised special needs groups. There is also evidence to show it can deliver savings to government. Despite this, there has been no new dedicated funding for cottage respite for close to a decade. By growing this valued program in a targeted manner, the Commonwealth government has the opportunity to greatly improve access to respite in geographic areas of need and among at-risk population groups, including people with dementia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD). Any places not filled by CHSP consumers could be opened up to the carers of Home Care Package clients and private-fee for service clients, providing additional support and alleviating pressure on residential respite.

How could a network of respite cottages be funded?

The cottage respite program would receive a wide-reaching boost by providing new block funding agreements up to a value of \$1 million per annum. The range in block funding agreements would depend on the model of the particular cottage; some cottages provide day respite during the week and overnight respite on weekends, while others offer support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Grant applicants could be selected through a competitive process that assesses applications on the basis of demonstrated need in the proposed location or among the targeted population group, innovation in service models and the cost effectiveness of the proposed model – balancing output hours and proposed savings against expenditure. Using this methodology, we estimate that the government could roll out 30 new respite cottages addressing real areas of need at a cost of up to \$30 million in annual recurrent funding.

To support the timely introduction of new respite cottages throughout Australia, the government could also provide dedicated capital grants or zero interest loans. These loans would be used to

support the purchase of land and construction or capital upgrades and renovations for rental properties.

A comprehensive package that included grant funding and capital support would enable the widely recognised benefits of cottage respite to be expanded to new locations and communities around the country, meeting consumer needs by providing more meaningful and appropriate respite services.

References

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