



Challenging times ahead for aged care

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The Federal Government has come under fire over its failure to address a ten-year funding crisis in aged care.

CEO of Barossa Village and board member of Aged & Community Services SA/NT, Mr Phillip Schmaal says the number of elderly people in the Barossa has increased in the last 10 years, but commonwealth government funding has not met increasing demands.

Mr Schmaal believes higher costs and comparatively low government funding means it is difficult for providers to keep up with the complex needs of elderly people in the community.

"Over the last 10 years, the gap between Federal Government funding for aged care and the increasingly complex costs of providing aged care has been getting wider," Mr Schmaal said.

"Government funding hasn't met the needs of elderly people and it's getting to a point where providers around Australia, like Barossa Village, are finding it difficult to absorb such high costs."

The government has recognised there's a problem in funding for aged care, announcing a Productivity Commission Review to look into aged care funding and issues.

However, the results of this commission will not be finalised until 2011, so the aged care sector is not likely to see any reform until

2012.

"We really need for the government to address this now, not in two years time because we are far from a sustainable situation at the moment," Mr Schmaal said.

"The aged care sector's confidence in the Commonwealth Government and its capacity to adequately supply services for the elderly is being severely tested."

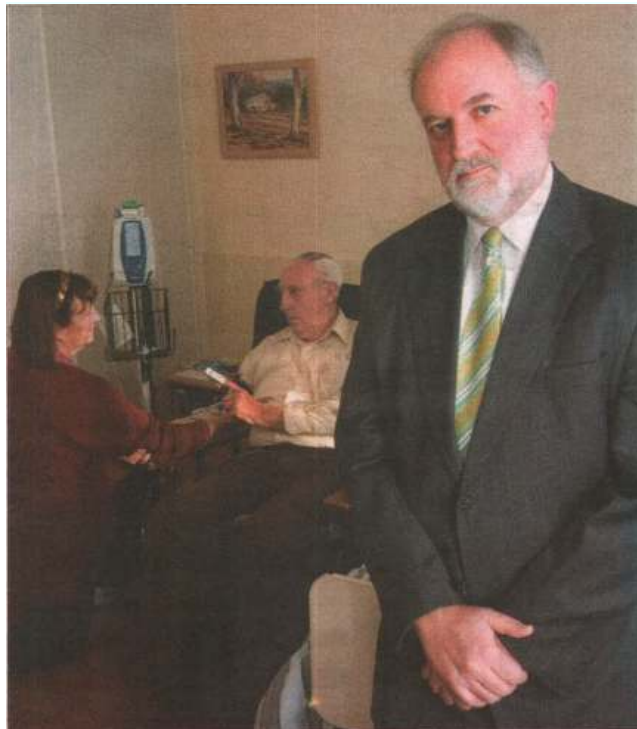
Employing full time aged-care nurses is difficult because organisations do not have the funding to match the higher nursing salaries in the hospital system, which received funding through the State Government.

"It's definitely a strain on our employees, and there are numerous occasions when it's difficult to fill shifts and rosters," Mr Schmaal said.

"We have to engage agency staff and pay higher overheads or alternatively, we need to ask employees to fill shifts they wouldn't normally work.

"With additional funding we could be paying nurses and carers a rate that was competitive with the hospital system and we would have much more flexibility to provide newer and more innovative services for residents.

"This is a serious issue that has been ignored for a long time because it's seen as being too difficult to address, and because the aged care sector hasn't been vocal enough."



Barossa Village CEO, Mr Phillip Schmaal is concerned that current government funding will not meet the needs of our aging population in the future.