

THE VOICE of Pensioners and Superannuants

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The right to basic nursing home information



AS part of its investigations, the Aged Care Royal Commission compiled fifty quality indicators about residential aged care.

Approaching those indicators thematically, the following categories emerge: (1) Appropriate use of medication; (2) Medication safety; (3) Hospital admissions; (4) Falls and fractures; (5) Pressure injuries; (6) Nutrition; (7) Restraints; (8) Consumer experience; (9) Staffing; (10) Compliance record; (11) Assaults; (12) Missing residents.

The information needed to compile these fifty quality indicators were, as the Aged Care Royal Commission's research paper says, "acquired under the legal authority of the Royal Commission and have not been available to researchers before".

Currently only seven of the twelve categories listed above (Pressure injuries, Nutrition, Restraints, Consumer experience, Compliance, Assaults and Missing residents) are compiled.

Indicators are useful at a number of levels from local to nationwide and for different audiences: nursing home managers, providers, regulators and ... consumers.

But here's the thing.

Consumers only get to see what's happening nationwide and in states and territories. They don't get to see what's happening in their facility or, if they are looking for a nursing home, facilities in their area. They can't compare and make a rational choice.

The point the Aged Care Royal Commission wanted to make with its research was that copious information is already collected which can be readily used to develop and maintain quality indicators.

The point CPSA wants to make is that this would really open up the nursing home industry to some healthy competition. Imagine what would happen to a nursing home that came bottom on staffing, for example. It would go out of business unless it shaped up.

The Aged Care Royal Commission's research paper demonstrated how illuminating quality indicators can be for consumers by comparing the performance of not-for-profit nursing homes (57% of all nursing homes), for-profits (34%) and Government-owned (9%).

Government-run homes showed the best average results for 31 indicators, compared to 2 indicators for not-for-profit homes and 1 indicator for the for-profit homes.

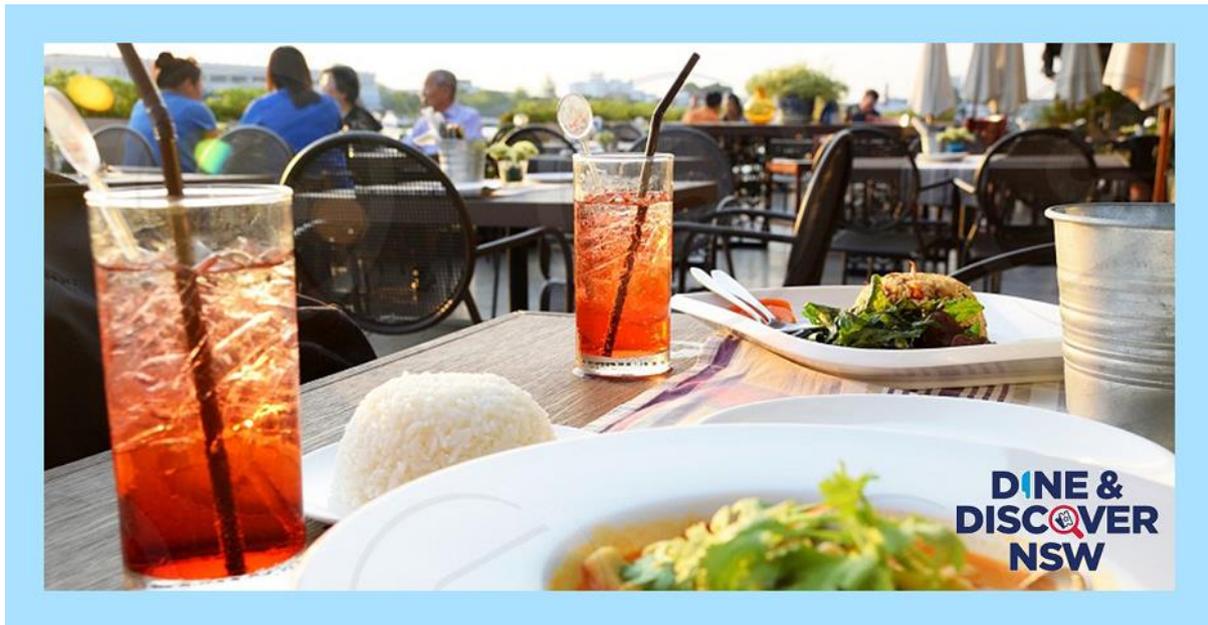
Non-profit homes had stronger average results than for-profit facilities on 25 indicators, whereas for-profit homes had stronger average results on 2 indicators.

Small homes with between 1 and 30 places showed the best average results for 24 indicators.

So, go small, go government-owned if possible or not-for-profit if not.

That's useful to know for a consumer!

How to get the Dine and Discover vouchers



THE Dine and Discover program is underway across NSW but how can you get your \$100 worth of vouchers?

These are all the ways you can apply for vouchers:

Digital vouchers: To access the app in order to get a digital voucher you must have a smartphone which is compatible with the Service NSW app. Some older smartphones are not compatible. Digital vouchers can also be applied for on a computer by clicking [here](#) and following the instructions.

Paper vouchers: Vouchers can be applied for in person at a Service NSW centre.

Text message vouchers: Can be applied by ringing Service NSW on 13 77 88. If you have a mobile phone you will receive a text message with four sets of letters and numbers that form a code representing each voucher. When you want to use the vouchers, you will have to read out this code. It is up to you to correctly differentiate between dining vouchers and entertainment vouchers.

For those who don't have a mobile phone and will be applying to Service NSW using a landline, your codes will be read out to you and you will have to write these codes down and store them carefully.

When you apply over the phone for your vouchers you must make the call yourself, no one else can do it on your behalf. It will take about 10-15 minutes and will require you to have two different forms of identification on hand.

The different forms of identification are a Medicare card, a pension card, a driver's licence, a passport, and a birth certificate.

Please let CPSA know if you have any problems getting your vouchers and we will raise your concerns with Service NSW.

Cheap(er) NBN connections on the way



THE NBN has put up a proposal for cheap internet connections for low-income Australians.

In summary, the proposal is for a concessional monthly subscription to cost between \$40 to \$50.

Currently, internet packages can cost up to around \$70 a month. For \$70 a month you can use as much internet as you like, at a reasonably fast speed.

The concessional NBN proposal would limit connection speeds between 12 Megabits per second (Mbps) to 25Mbps. There will also be data caps, meaning the amount of internet you can access each month is limited. And those who already have existing NBN internet connections cannot switch to the concessional plan.

To be eligible for the concessional plan you would need to have a concession card and too not have an NBN internet connection. It's not quite clear whether this would also mean holders of a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card would be eligible, but all social security recipients would be eligible.

This is the proposal as it currently stands, but there is more consultation to come.

For people who rely on their mobile phone plan for internet access this concessional NBN plan may be attractive. However, for an additional \$20 a month there are other internet packages that offer faster internet with less restrictions.

However, for those who cannot afford \$70 a month, \$40-\$50 a month isn't that much of a discount. Consider the large group of people who receive the JobSeeker Payment. For many of these people, any NBN connection, whether full price or concessional, is not on the radar. Many use public libraries for internet access.

Although the sentiment of the concessional package is good, the cost is still too high for people really struggling and the quality of the package doesn't appear to match the limited discount. In its current state, who would really take up this concessional offer?

The NBN proposal is not generous but perhaps more importantly, it frames the problem of the digital divide as it affects people as an affordability problem only. It's important to remember that the cost of devices and lack of opportunities for digital education also limit access to internet services.