

The Baron Report

Beast of Burden

by Neil Baron

*Ill never be your beast of burden
My back is broad but its a hurting*
Rolling Stones 1978

An interesting conversation with a senior manager from Queensland has led to this title and indeed the whole article.

She was indicating the ever increasing levels of work that she was required to do to ensure that her facility was properly functioning was taking its toll and was impacting on her marriage.

Hubby was laying down the law and she was now starting to side with him.

She indicated that life is too short to come home every night too tired to do anything but flop into a chair and grab a drink. She was tired of being a beast of burden.

While the money had been nice initially she said that it no longer had the same appeal.

Her ideal solution would be to work three days a week, to share her job, but realistically this is not possible.

She would just worry if she was not there or have to work twice as hard to ensure that her

time off would not disadvantage anyone.

Well, welcome to residential aged care in 2008.

Now I can hear those out there starting to complain that this article is garbage, misleading and incorrect.

No it is not, it might not be happening to you at the present moment, but it is affecting good people on an ever increasing basis.

Let start with a few facts:

1. There is a shortage of nurses at all levels, with scarcity becoming more obvious as the level of responsibility increases.

2. There is a shortage now of senior managers that is extending into double digits.

3. While head-hunting and offering generous arrangements are finding staff, they are frequently people that are leaving existing facilities short. I am a strong believer that every person has a responsibility to do what is best for themselves. I firmly believe that nurses

should be going for the best possible deal they can get, (after all your working life is limited) but the reality is when the music stops there is a facility that has no one to replace those that have left.

Many places are also finding that having someone coming directly from the acute sector is not the solution, with a lack of aged care knowledge causing major concerns.

4. The work is not getting easier, rather it is becoming more difficult with resident's care needs becoming more demanding.

5. While the accreditation process has been a most necessary first step to change the industry it is now time to re-evaluate it so that it does not crush those working in it. It is time for a streamlining and simplification process that is understandable by all and not open to individual interpretation.

6. There has to be incentives and rewards for dedication. The statement that we do it because we

care about the residents is fine, but does wear thin.

7. Better buildings are not the only criteria that counts, despite many CEOs using property and projects as their major KPI or measure of success. Bigger is better appears to be the belief with little consideration for how the larger facility will be run. Oh, that is up to the nursing staff.

As an 'endangered species' you give a lot to your facility, ensure that it is not just a one way street.

As an industry we must all raise our voices loud and clear that the present system is not working and changes need to be made NOW.

Apology

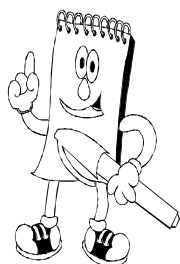
It has been brought to our attention that people are patiently waiting for the *Baron Report* and we need to produce them more often.

We hear you and will ensure that this situation is corrected.

Opportunity for Management Improvement

by Carla Baron

Would you like to have something you have written or said published? Simply mail, fax or e-mail us a copy with your details and we will try to make it happen.



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It comes as no surprise to all in the industry that there is an acute shortage of managers with aged care management knowledge and skills.

Experienced EO's, nursing and departmental managers are leaving the industry faster than they can be replaced.

Those that remain are frequently swamped with the workload and if they actually get a stretch of leave, find that there is no one with enough knowledge to really backfill, so upon their return they face a major catch up on the work that accumulated in their absence.

A merry-go-round scenario is obvious. As one leaves, others shift between organisations believing a change is as good as a rest. 'New blood' is often from the acute sector or someone in house who may have been very good in their position but with little management and/or regulatory knowledge.

An opportunity exists to address this problem by beginning to provide new and potential managers with the knowledge to enable them to more effectively fill the management role, be delegated management

tasks, backfill during periods of leave and



available to the industry to replace the current managers as they exit.

N & C Baron & Associates in collaboration with the Nursing Industry Skills Centre will commence their second aged care specific management course. This practical industry focussed Certificate IV in Service Coordination (Aging & Disability) will provide successful participants with clear relevant and practical information to enhance their job performance.

This course is designed to specifically prepare nursing and non-nursing personnel for management positions in Aged Care and is suitable for:

- managers already working within the industry and wanting to formalise their skills
- managers working in similar sectors (ie acute care) but wishing to enter aged care
- persons within aged care who aspire to management positions •

persons taking on team leader responsibilities in aged care.

It is planned that by 2110, this course will be revised to Diploma status. Bridging arrangements will be in place for those in receipt of the Certificate IV to upgrade their qualification.

Don't miss this opportunity to begin to address this problem and to start implementing a plan for the future.

For further information, see enclosed brochure.

Enquiries to neil@ncbaron.com or telephone 8276 9763.

As one participant summed up:

** Although the course is aimed at a management level, every aged care facility should seriously consider sending at least one Level 1 RN per year to the course, to enhance their role. It would be great if more RN's working in aged care were allowed that knowledge.*

Good or Evil - Can a job change a Person?

by Neil Baron

"Once you put a uniform on, and are given a role, I mean, a job, saying 'your job is to keep these people in line,' then you're certainly not the same person if you're in street clothes and in a different role. You really become that person once you put on the khaki uniform, you put on the glasses, you take the nightstick, and you act the part. That's your costume and you have to act accordingly when you put it on."

— Guard Hellmann - Stanford Prison Project (*The Lucifer Effect* - Philip Zimbardo)

Anyone in a position of power must be mindful of their obligations to carry out their role in a fair, equitable and objective manner. It is too easy to overstep the mark and by so doing cause trauma to those they are addressing.

I first heard about Philip Zimbardo and his controversial experiment in 1979 while studying psychology at Flinders University and have been intrigued ever since.

Zimbardo has gained notoriety in recent years with his book, *The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil*.

It is interesting to note that there is renewed interest today, particularly since the revelations, complete with photos of the atrocities carried out by some military police on prisoners at Abu Graib Prison outside of Baghdad. This issue is likely to be revisited in relation to the whole sad and sorry handling of 'terrorists' by the United States with statements by President incumbent, Barack Obama indicating that torture is not acceptable and that he will not tolerate this type of behaviour.

In 1971 Zimbardo developed a two week project now known as the *Stanford Prison Project* "...a classic demonstration of the power of social situations to distort personal identities." The project was discontinued after six days due to the adverse reactions of the participants.

The experiment was meant to gauge how university students would respond in a simulated prison setting.

Randomly half the subjects were selected as guards and half as prisoners.

Effectively you had a group that was well educated, balanced and did not show any glaring differences between themselves.

The changes in their behaviour were almost immediate. Those chosen as guards adopted dress, manner and style of hard core custodians and became totally engrossed in their roles. It was as if they were given authority to behave in that manner.

The project was discontinued due to the emotional and psychological damage that the prisoners experienced.

Zimbardo, recently in an interview with Andrew Denton on *Enough Rope* conceded that he would be sued if the project was run today.

There is an excellent website on the project, www.zimbardo.com/ and it is well worth looking at.

What has this to do with aged care, surely no one would behave in this manner?

Anecdotal evidence continues to surface that overstepping the mark is perceived with some assessors in aged care.

Unfortunately many that are disadvantaged are unable or unwilling to stand up and complain of this unacceptable behaviour due to fear of retribution.

As consultants we hear many stories, from a variety of sources. Each instance needs to be carefully examined and judged but we keep

hearing about some assessors behaving in demanding and unreasonable ways and pushing their weight around. Suggestions are said more as commands and notions of "I want to see" etc. are indicated.

The topic of how facilities perceive assessors is recurring and in common whether in South Australia, New South Wales or Queensland. Some are seen as exceeding their authority and pushing for unrealistic demands, but complainers remain silent for fear of retribution. There have been reports of staff being traumatised and reduced to tears.

An assessor is in a position of great power in a stressful time during a visit to a facility and it is critical that everyone feels that the process is fair.

No one wants to see a facility that is not taking its responsibility towards its residents seriously and ensuring that a safe and secure environment with professional care ever present.

It there is any hint of less than an acceptable standard being present it is everyone's responsibility to bring these issues to the attention of the relevant bodies for correction. We have an obligation to ensure that residents are not disadvantaged or put at risk and that they are able to maintain as good a quality of life that is possible.

BUT it is also critically important that facilities are able to run their businesses and be judged in a fair and equitable manner, free of intimidation and someone flexing their position.

Thorny 9 - Straight from the Horse's Mouth

by Carla Baron

The mid-winter blues were momentarily set aside for attendees at the 9th Annual Thorny Issues Conference, Straight from the Horse's Mouth that in true thorny form canvassed issues of concern to the industry.

Elizabeth Dabars State Secretary of the ANF started the day off by discussing attributes of leadership. She contends that what differentiates a good leader from a poor leader is values, respecting people through engagement and encouragement rather than devaluing people.

Participants were particularly enthusiastic about the presentations and interactions of the next two speakers, Victoria Crawford, General Manager Accreditation with the Aged Care

Standards & Accreditation Agency Inc and Darren Clarke, Assistant State Manager, Office of Aged Care Quality & Compliance Department of Health & Ageing.

Victoria provided the audience with some interesting statistics about the industry's Accreditation performance across Australia. She also advised participants of some of the changes, which she described as minimal, in this year's Accreditation round and directed them to the Agency website to download the revised Self-Assessment/Application and have a look at the revised Results and Processes manual.

Darren talked about the Role of the Department

and provided information about the workings of the Complaints Investigation Scheme.

But what attendees found most useful with the shared discussion that helped delineate the difference in roles between the two groups: the Department being concerned with legislation and the individual, while the Agency through their legislated mandate focus on the systems and processes an organization employs to ensure quality service delivery.

What exactly is the difference between a DON, DOC, Site Manager or whatever? Thorny favorite, Robert Godden typically kept people awake after lunch was a humorous but thought-provoking presentation about role

definition.

The day was rounded out by Industrial Relations Consultant, Gary Collis who contends that in today's stressful world, we are almost always "1 Degree Below Boiling" and that "toxic workplaces" just contribute to this by managing only by reaction. He challenged managers to become proactive in providing 'time out' places for staff to wind down before they break instead of trying to pick up the pieces after.

Final feedback – just skimmed the surface of the challenges faced – lots more to do and explore. And we will keep on doing that - don't miss next year's conference: Thorny 10 – Thursday 27th August 2009 - put it in you diary NOW!

Resort for Residents

We have recently had an interesting discussion with an owner of a country club resort in the Riverlands with a view to having some residents being able to use their services for a holiday or getaway.

While we appreciate that there will be many that are no longer able, it would be a wonderful break for some.

The facility is safe and secure, understands special meals and dietary requirements and has rooms that could easily accommodate residents.

Will keep you informed of this exciting prospect.

Seasons Greetings

We wish you and yours a happy holiday and a wonderful year ahead



Carla and Neil