

The Accreditation Feedback Debate

by Neil Baron

As consultants we are always having discussions with a wide variety of individuals from numerous facilities either in person or over the telephone.

Invariably the topic of accreditation raises its head; how they felt it went, good points and bad points and who were the auditors. Not that the auditor should make a difference if the process is being followed.

The answers that we have received are mixed with a lot of concerns raised, but people acknowledging that they wouldn't say anything to the Agency as they fear retaliation.

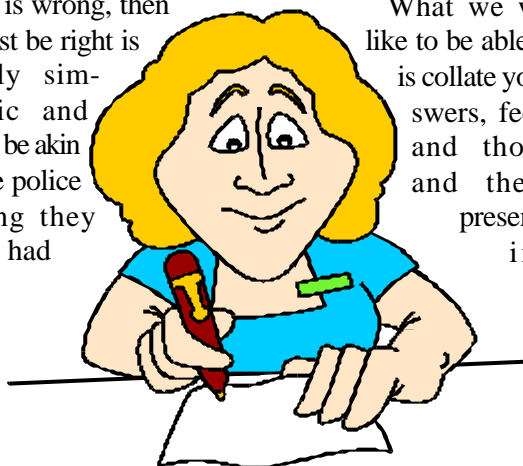
We raised this issue over lunch with The Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency's CEO, Mark Brandon, at the sixth, International Association of Homes and Services for the Ageing conference in June 2005 in Trondheim, Norway.

Mark's response was that Accreditation feedback sheets are overwhelmingly positive and that nobody complained so therefore they could only conclude that there were no problems. When we mentioned the fear of retaliation if people did complain he challenged us to "name one."

Now we can understand where Mark is com-

ing from but do not agree with his conclusions.

If nobody says the situation is wrong, then it must be right is overly simplistic and could be akin to the police saying they have had no



reports of domestic violence so therefore it is not happening.

We believe in an accreditation system for aged care and feel that it has been the best thing to happen to the industry.

We believe that aged care is dealing with a vulnerable population and that provision of quality care in a safe and secure environment is paramount.

What we have had concerns about is the stories that we continue to hear of the auditing process being overly subjective and inconsistent.

Now whether we are hearing fact or fantasy is not certain, but we work on the basis that we are dealing with responsible adults who are in positions of trust who want to ensure the best possible outcomes for

the residents they are charged to provide acceptable outcomes for.

What we would like to be able to do is collate your answers, feelings and thoughts and then to present this information

tion so that a measure of clarity and understanding by an independent source is available for further consideration by decision makers.

We do not wish to cloud anyone's perceptions nor to pre-empt conclusions, but feel that if people are having a post accreditation winge, that is fine. But if there are more serious concerns that are not being addressed then it is important that this message is in some way addressed so as to allow for changes in the system. Do not hesitate because you may be the only one with a concern. Your input will provide an opportunity for the system to be improved.

Equally we would like to hear about positive experiences, we don't want

to see the bits that are working changed.

It must be remembered that the present accreditation system is mandatory rather than optional and that to fulfil the necessary requirements facilities have only one choice from which to purchase the service. And you do pay for this service; are you getting value for your money?

While monopoly services have been a past feature of many instrumentalities of Australian life, it is safe to say that many of us are better off having competition and choice in who we obtain our service from, telecommunications being a prime example.

Like any monopoly service, without the impetus of competition, feedback is critically important as the only vehicle available to drive change.

Don't miss this opportunity to have your say.

We will publish results in an upcoming edition of *The Baron Report*.

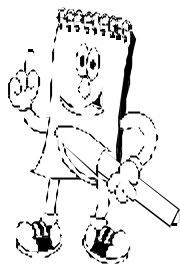
Have Your
Say,
Do
it
Today

Horses for Courses?

Who does your facility really need?

by Neil 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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A telephone call and a frantic request for help from a facility in Queensland over what sort of questions they should ask prospective applicants to fill the soon to be vacant DON position is the inspiration for this article.

They were in a state of panic because they had not anticipated that the DON would leave and they don't have an HR department to handle the situation. Not used to doing HR or having an understanding of the many pitfalls that exist, they nevertheless had to find a new key employee.

So where to start? Well if you are hoping to fill any position it is a good idea to know what you are looking for.

Let's use the horse analogy for a moment. No we are not comparing lovely people to horses, although we do hear from some staff about the a few cows that they have to work with.

That is very naughty and we never condone that sort of talk. All people are lovely in their own way, but we should not be judging people but rather looking at job performance.

Therefore if you are looking for a race horse it would be good to find a thoroughbred that will be able to handle the rigours of fast pace in short bursts. To be able to ignore the

crowd noise and activity distractions and to be



able to be controlled by the jockey. A tough task but one that does illustrate the champions from the 'also rans'.

Conversely if you are looking for a strong creature to be part of a team pulling a heavy wagon then a Clydesdale or Percheron would be what you want. Here you want a team player who can follow directions immediately and repeatedly with consistency.

So what do you expect of the person who will fill your position? And could, or should the job be designed to fit the person or have the person fit the position.

Now many places say we need an RN, full stop. But do they ever sit down and breakdown the tasks required of that person and attempt to see if anyone else can do the job.

Rosters for instance, can only RN's do this job?

We are all aware that there is a worldwide shortage of RNs. So let's only use this scarce resource when it is absolutely necessary. Breakdown the tasks and then see if there is any other way to have it

successfully and correctly completed.

In aged care we do have specific nursing duties, but many tasks are not.

Breakdown the tasks that you want the person to do and put a percentage figure on each. That is how much of the person's time is it absolutely necessary to have an RN or EN qualified person doing the job.

By long term observation, it would appear, that many office and computer tasks are definitely better completed by clerical staff. It is always surprising to find senior staff that are computer illiterate, but rather than stretching and learning are content to try and bluff their way around the issue.

Any job position should have a series of tests to be asked of applicants to ensure that they are not only 'talking the talk' but are capable of 'walking the walk.'

Clearly know what task or job you want filled by the person

What qualifications or skills do they need to be able to do the job?

Does the person you are selecting have those qualities

How do you really know?

Conference Feedback

by Carla Baron

March was a busy conference month for N & C Baron & Associates with the presentation of two of their most popular annual conferences.

Carers' Conference

This year's theme '*Getting Satisfaction*' assisted participants to become better informed about opportunities to improve their job satisfaction in the present and plan for future job fulfilment.

Human Resource researcher, Robert Godden, completed a quick random survey as people were registering and came up with some really interesting and surprising results.

MANAGERS TAKE NOTE: a clear majority of people would prefer a quiet word of appreciation and thanks by their manager over either public or monetary recognition such as presentations or vouchers. Although a small sample, it is worth further reflection and in-facility discussion.

One hot issue this year is the entry of the ANF to represent carers into the industrial ring.

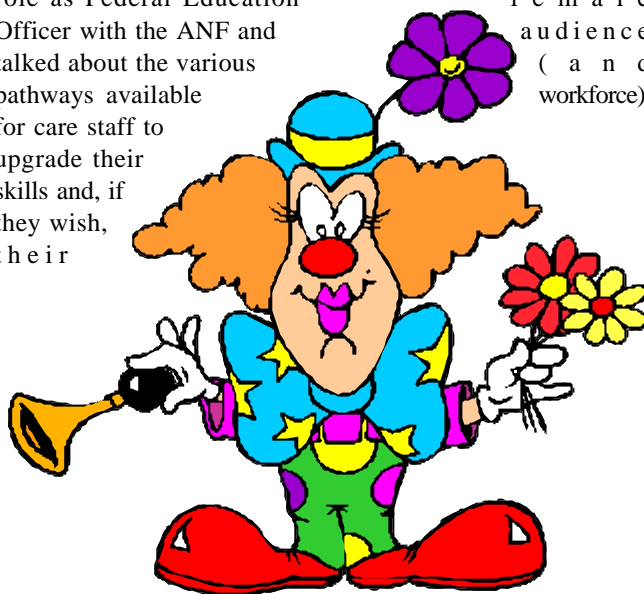
Both ANF and LHMU representatives gave compelling briefs about why their organisation could best represent carers.

N & C Baron made clear that they were not supporting union membership in either union but believe that carers need information to make informed choices.

A focus on keeping well was identified as a pre-requisite to satisfaction with Marion Pocock, OH&S consultant and Kevin Wilhelm from Workcover providing participants with valuable practical information

about injury prevention and, should the worst happen, effective injury management.

Each year the Carers Conference has encouraged carers to consider further development opportunities. Rob Bonner supplied this year's information in his new role as Federal Education Officer with the ANF and talked about the various pathways available for care staff to upgrade their skills and, if they wish, their



qualifications.

The day ended on a high note with a really thought-provoking presentation and group discussion.

Recognising the Australian aversion to 'dobbing in', how can a carer meet their duty of care to residents when faced with a colleague is not doing the right thing and may even be putting residents at risk?

Michael Hegarty, a solicitor with special interest in aged care, talked about what duty of care means and the legal and ethical implications of these situations.

Leisure Conference

Sheds, clowns and culture – what more could you want? This year's leisure conference was a huge hit according to the evaluations of the over 100 participants.

Mark Thomson, the "Real" Shed Man author of the very popular 'Blokes and Sheds' book, started the ball rolling with a beautifully relaxed but really insightful presentation about the 'culture' behind the building.

Being a primarily female audience (and workforce),

Mark helped us not only to understand sheds but to understand men!

So many of his stories and examples were accompanied by murmurs and exclamations of "my husband does that" or "that's why I got in to trouble when I cleaned the shed" or other similar anecdotes.

Carla provided the group with a far less entertaining but hopefully useful session about (oh no, not again!) documentation.

The goal of this session was to provide participants with the resources to empower them to make their own decisions about appropriate leisure documentation formats and practices.

Joanne Cobham from Bartonvale Nursing Home received resounding support and interest when she presented the new format she had made to take her

documentation from non-compliant to workable and userfriendly compliance.

Kay Bruni and Heather Evans from Morpeth Nursing Home joined Tracy Baron to discuss the benefits of, and show us snippets from the Living Memories program that pairs schools with aged care facilities to video some of the history and memories of residents.

Just to prove that leisure programs (and conferences) can be fun and still be effective, the team of Wendy Pringle, Julie Lott and Colleen Evans from Hahndorf Nursing Home told us about their highly successful 'Clowning Around' program.

Doing this in full costume brightened the day not just for our participants, but for many visitors and staff at the Education Development Centre as they waited in the hall for their cue to enter from DON Suzanne Fuller.

The day would not be complete without Neil, our resident leisure specialist who talked about Culture, what it is, what it means to people and how it works or affects residents and staff in residential aged care.

N & C Baron & Associates are committed to these annual events because they value the staff who work in aged care and believe these staff deserve the opportunity to network with their peers and extend their own professional development but mostly because each year participants tell us how valuable the conferences are and how much they enjoy them.

See you next year. Don't forget to tell us (phone, mail, e-mail or fax) if there is something special you want presented at your next conference.

Accreditation - How was it for you?

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.
Eleanor Roosevelt

State _____ **Facility** High [] Low [] Under 50 [] Over 50 []

1. How would you describe the accreditation process for this round?

Excellent [] Good [] Fair [] Poor []

Comments _____

2. How did this round compare with previous rounds?

Better [] Same [] Worse []

Comments _____

3. How would you describe the auditors involved in your process?

Excellent [] Good [] Fair [] Poor []

Comments _____

4. Were the auditors 'helpful'?

Yes [] No []

Comments _____

5. Was the process conducted the way that you thought it would be?

Yes [] No [] Better [] Worse []

Comments _____

6. Do you believe the auditing process was:

Educational Yes [] No []
Directive Yes [] No []
Informative Yes [] No []

Comments _____

7. Would you be happy to have the same auditors back again?

Yes [] No []

Comments _____

8. ~~Was the process~~ **'transparent'** (*def. easy to see through, understand, or recongise- Collins Concise Dictionary*)

Yes [] No []

Comments _____

9. Do you believe that your facility received 'value for money' from this process?

Yes [] No []

Comments _____

10. Did you return the feedback sheet to the Agency?

Yes [] No []

Comments _____

Another further comments that you wish to make

Nurses As Leaders

by Carla Baron



In the last Baron Report, we talked about the issue of Leadership including recruiting and retaining the right people.

Interesting then to receive the most recent publication from the Nurses Board of South Australia about 'Scope of Practice'. Interesting because many of our leaders in Aged Care are nurses. DONs, CNCs, RNs all take leadership positions within their organisations.

Some even extend their scope of practice to provide management of other areas including any or all services offered to residents such as leisure and lifestyle, catering, cleaning, laundry and maintenance. In some instances they take on coordination of major building projects and become the interior designer/decorator, as well. There are varying levels of financial responsibility and management taken by these leaders.

The Scope of Practice publication is useful and

timely in reminding nursing leaders and their Boards or proprietors about some important and relevant issues.

"The Nurses Board of South Australia upholds that no nurse ... may be directed, pressured or compelled by an employer, or any other person in authority, to engage in any practice that falls short of, or is in breach of any professional standard, guideline and/or code of conduct or practice."

If an organisation persists in requiring a staff member take on duties and responsibilities beyond their (current) ability, they need to consider their actions carefully. Is it possible that they are 'pressuring or compelling' that person? And with what possible consequences – for the person? for the residents? for the organisation? Have they provided sufficient education, financial and emotional support?

But, responsibility does not sit with the employer,

Board or proprietor alone. Nurses as responsible adults and professional people need to be assertive about the resources they need to do their job effectively.

The Nurses Board publication delineates seven 'Principles Underpinning Scope of Nursing Practice' that include nurses' accountability for communicating in the context of risk management and their accountability and responsibility "for their own decisions, actions and practice."

Principle 7 states: "Nurses provide leadership and require supportive practice environments to enable them to fulfil and work within their full scope of practice."

Too often, we see otherwise capable leaders put themselves in the victim role by not communicating and/or challenging poor decisions about systems or resources. This is just not acceptable and cannot be condoned nor excused.

Editor's Comment

Sometimes it appears to a non-nursing person that nurses believe that they can do anything and that they have some sort of secret knowledge that no one should challenge them on.

While everyone can respect that a person who is trained in an area should have a good understanding of that area, it is not always possible to then stretch that conclusion to other areas of expertise.

If nurses want to be respected as leaders, they must be able to demonstrate that they are worthy of the title through knowledge, skill and experience not because there is a shortage and therefore it becomes a situation of anybody to fill the void.

THORNY 7 – WHAT A CHALLENGE!

Hard to believe it is our seventh annual Thorny Issues and, as always, there is no shortage of contentious issues to discuss. This year, however, it is particularly challenging with so much change occurring in our midst. The emerging issue of Elder abuse, new industrial laws, changes in Workcover and the ongoing shortage of, not just registered nurses but all levels of aged care staff.

What better time to start informing yourself:

THORNY ISSUES 7

Thursday 24th August

MARK YOUR DIARY NOW.

Full details to follow shortly.

We are pleased to advise that **Lillian Jeter**, Executive Director of the Elder Abuse Prevention Association as our keynote speaker. Many may have seen Lillian on the

ABC Lateline program focussing on elder abuse in residential aged care. You do not want to miss her presentation and the discussions that will result.