

Editorial

Jacqueline Bloomfield • RN, PhD, MN, PGDip (Prof Healthcare Ed), PGDip (Midwifery), PGCert (Onc Nursing), BN
University of Sydney Susan Wakil School of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, NSW, Australia
Email jacqueline.bloomfield@sydney.edu.au

Karen Strickland • RN, PhD, MSc, PGCert, BSc, FHEA, FEANS
Professor of Nursing and Head of School, School of Nursing, Midwifery & Public Health, Building 10, Room 34, Faculty of Health,
University of Canberra, ACT, Australia
Email karen.strickland@canberra.edu.au

For referencing Bloomfield J & Strickland K. Editorial. *Australian Journal of Cancer Nursing* 2021; 22(1):1.

DOI <https://doi.org/10.33235/ajcn.22.1.1>

Greetings to everyone and welcome to the latest issue of the *Australian Journal of Cancer Nursing*. The year is now in full swing and, like us, you too may be finding it hard to believe that it is already April.

In Australia we have been fortunate regarding the effects of the global pandemic which is still having devastating effects in Europe, the UK, the USA and many parts of Asia. Closer to our shores, COVID-19 is causing increasing concern in Papua New Guinea, where the number of cases continues to rise; many of those affected are healthcare workers. Our thoughts go out to our professional colleagues working in Papua New Guinea, and we hope that the situation soon improves.

While the national vaccination program has now started in Australia, it has become evident that this is a mammoth challenge. Subsequently, we are now learning that it is going to take longer than anticipated. As front-line nurses and health workers, many of you may have already had your first vaccination, yet, you will also know that this is not a time for complacency. We must all stay vigilant to the dangers of the disease, and the importance of infection control. This is especially important given the vulnerability of people with cancer.

While Australia can be applauded for the way in which it is addressing the pandemic, it is unfortunate that the same cannot be said for our aged care system. In March the final report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety was published.¹ This report highlighted considerable deficits related to accessing healthcare, system navigation, staffing levels and training, and funding issues. What is, however, of more concern are the number of cases of substandard care and abuse that now pervades the Australian aged care system. As stated in the report, “this is a disgrace and should be a source of national shame” (p. 68). Without doubt, it is.

Like many other countries, Australia has an ageing population. Our aged care system must now undergo extensive reform to ensure that it can fully meet the current and future needs of older people in our community. It is essential that older people

are treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve. As nurses and healthcare professionals, we all have a role in this. As cancer can be considered an age-related disease, this is of particular relevance. Cancer nurses are and will be caring for people already receiving or needing aged care services in the future, and we challenge you to get involved. Improving your knowledge about aged care, increasing public awareness of available aged care resources, or advocating for the needs of older people are just some of the ways that you can help to make a difference. Collectively, our voice as nurses can lead to improvement. Working together to make aged care a national priority is now imperative.

The Editors,

Jacqueline Bloomfield and Karen Strickland

Reference

1. Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. Final report: executive summary. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia; 2021. Available from: <https://aged.care.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/final-report-executive-summary>