**M-Enabling Australasia 2013 Conference**

**Day 1 – Why M-enabling matters to Australia: 10:15 – 10:45am**

SCOTT HOLLIER: I'll hand back to Teresa.

TERESA CORBIN: OK. We're obviously running a little bit over time – actually, quite a lot over time. We're going to push morning tea back a little bit. But if I could also now ask that perhaps we hold our questions – maybe use some of our other technology if we have available to follow up questions later on, or even those of you that are tweeting might like to tweet your questions and follow the discussion that way?

We'd like to introduce Professor Graeme Hugo from the University of Adelaide now. I'm just looking around where he might be. There he is. If I could just welcome you to the stage.

(APPLAUSE)

GRAEME HUGO: Thanks very much for inviting me to this very, very important event. I'm a demographer. I study how populations change. Particularly, I analyse the way in which the Australian population is changing. Population change is gradual. It doesn't happen overnight, like much economic and political change. As a result, it tends to creep up on us. Very often, it's overlooked. What I'd like to do – and I understand that your time is very short and I think I'm supposed to have finished 20 minutes ago...

(LAUGHTER)

What I'm going to do is to say a little bit about how Australia's population is changing, and try and discuss some of the implications for disability. Because I think there are very, very substantial implications, particularly relating to the ageing of the population. I think it's a very important element to include in the advocacy in this very, very important area. If we look at this quotation, it's from a chief economist at the OEC D. You might think that it's a little bit old as a quotation, but I don't very often have chief economists telling us that demography is the most important thing which is affecting our nation. Even in Australia now, with the intergenerational reports, the Treasury has identified ageing of really being a fundamental and important area which we need to address. I will skip over several of the slides. I'm very happy to provide them to you. But I know that you are stuck for time.

In Australia, our population is growing relatively rapidly. It's growing currently at about 1.7% per annum. Just by comparison, Indonesia's population is growing at 1% per annum. China's population is growing at 0.4% per annum. So we're growing fast, by any standards. Population growth is made up of two major elements. This diagram shows how, since World War II, Australia's population has changed. Firstly, through natural increase, which is the lower part of the diagram, which is births minus deaths. The top part of the diagram is through net migration – the excess of immigration over emigration. You can see that natural increase has been very steady over that period, but migration has been much more volatile. Particularly, it's been significant in recent times. Just briefly, I want to touch on each of these three processes. They're very important if we're looking to the future of Australia's population.

First of all, mortality. What this diagram shows is the expectation of life at birth. In other words, how long people could expect to live. Currently, in Australia, for a girl born today, she could expect to live to about 85. For a boy, around about 79 years. In my lifetime alone, we've added 13 years of extra life to the average Australian, which is a massive change. A bigger change, though, has come not so much in the expectation of life at age zero, but at age 50. What this table shows is that, if we look at people at age 50, how much on average can they expect to live further? Between 1900 and 1970, it only increased about two years in terms of the numbers of years people could expect to live. Since 1970, we've added nine years of extra life to an Australian aged over 50. In other words, when I turn 50, I could expect to live nine years longer than when my dad turned 50. Now, I get excited about these numbers, but when I give them to my first‑year class of 18‑ and 19‑year‑olds, there's a big yawn.

(LAUGHTER)

I must say that, every year that goes by, I look at these statistics with a bit more interest.

(LAUGHTER)

The reality is, though, that Australians are living these many years longer. It is of crucial significance, particularly when we're looking at things like retirement age and so on. Paradoxically, if we look at the incidence of disability, it is increasing with able. You might say that's counterintuitive – we're living longer. But the incidence of disability in older people is greater than it was in the past. That's basically because we're actually rescuing people from death. People who otherwise would have died of heart attacks or a stroke or whatever are surviving, but not necessarily as fully fit individuals. Added to that, obesity is increasing. That's adding to the disability load among the older population. If you look at fertility, on the other hand, this diagram shows the total fertility rate or the average number of babies that women are having over the last 100 years or so in Australia. You can see it went down from around over four in 1900 to around two during the Depression of the '30s. Following World War II, we had the baby boom – my mum's generation had, on average, about 3.8 children. There was this big increase in fertility. That happened all over the world. But in Australia, it happened more – it was a higher level of increase. And it went longer – it went for 20 years. That created a baby‑boom generation, a very important part of our population who are now on the threshold of moving into older age groups, and hence greatly increasing our older population.

But migration is has also been important. Australia really is a country of migration. Half of us are a migrant or the child of a migrant. If you look at the United States, for example, only 18% are a first‑ or second‑generation migrant, so we are a quintessential migration population. If we look at one of the things said about migration – it tends to make our population younger, because most migrants definitely are younger. But the thing is that migrants don't stay the same age – they age like the rest of us. So if we look at the age structure of the overseas‑born population and that of the Australian‑born population, which I've done here, the overseas‑born population, in fact, is older, and 1 in 3 of our older people today in Australia was overseas‑born, and 1 in 4 was born in a culturally and linguistically diverse country. That adds another dimension, of course, to disability and demand and need for services among those older age groups, with a very significant number being from those culturally diverse areas.

Demographers like me, when they give a talk, have to have an age pyramid. That's mine. This is the age‑sex structure of Australia at the moment. What that shows is fluctuations in the past in our fertility and mortality. You can pick out the baby‑boomers – that very, very significant group born between the 1950s and 1970. You can see them about to move into the 60‑plus age group. They're a very big group. A colleague of mine in public health sees it as 6 million people lining up for a hip replacement. The reality is that it is going to lead to a very significant increase in the numbers of people who are disabled, because baby boomers are a quarter of our population, and a third of our workforce. Whatever they do is really very significant. I have produced some projections here of what our population is going to look like into the future. What this diagram shows is the numbers of growth we're going to have according to age. The left‑hand side being young, the right‑hand side, the older population. This is the next 10 years. If we add another 10 years, what you can see there is that, even with a very rapidly growing population or the next 20 years, two‑thirds of that growth is going to be due to large numbers of baby boomers moving into older age groups. And I cannot get this across in my discussions with Government. Government sees growth as being growth of young couples. In fact, growth is going to be growth of our older population. The significance of that for the areas which you're particularly interested in is really profound. And I must say that it's something that we have a lot of trouble getting Government to accept.

What are some of the impacts that baby boomers are going to have? We're goes to go a 50% increase in the number of people aged over 55 in the next decades. There will be a decline of older people in the next ratio. The next generation of older people will have all sorts of different characteristics. It's not going to be more of the same in terms of what their needs and attitudes and demands are. They're going to be quite different. Not only that – they live in different places to the current generation of older people. So a lot of the fixed resources we have to provide services to older people are going to not be where those older people are actually going to be living.

In the paper – and I'll try and wrap up very quickly – I've done my own projections to say what this means for disability. So I've taken the disability statistics from the census and from surveys which are done by the Bureau of Statistics, and I've projected them forward on the total population. What it shows is some really dramatic increases in the numbers of disabled persons, and particularly I'll focus on the more profoundly disabled groups. What this shows is that there will be a more than doubling in the numbers with profound disabilities over the next 20 years. So it's significantly greater than the growth of the population as a whole. This, I think, is a very significant statistic, and any projections which are based simply on the growth of the population as a whole are going to be ineffective. I think one of the things in doing this work which I noticed is that we have quite a lot of information about disability and the disabled population in Australia, but none of it is really made very available. We see a stereotyping of disabled people into particular categories, yet they're an extremely heterogeneous group. It's important in things like M‑Enabling to really understand that diversity within those groups and to cater for that.

In providing care for older Australians into the future, there are many challenges. Currently, the major source of care for older Australians is the family. Families are changing. The availability of family to be there for helping older people in their latter years is going to be greatly reduced. A quarter of baby boomers don't have a partner, whereas most of the previous generation going into old age went into old age as a couple. A quarter of them now are going into old age single. So their ability to call on a partner for support and so on is not going to be there to the same extent. They won't be calling on children – it's likely those children are going to be live in another city elsewhere. This creates particular issues and opportunities for an M‑Enabling capacity, because the ability of older people to be able to call on traditional forms of support is going to be considerably reduced. There's going to be many more of them. There's a very significant proportion living in low‑density, non‑metropolitan areas. We do quite a bit of work in rural areas, and the challenges of older people living in isolated communities – the challenges in being able to access services, being engaged in social interaction, are really massive. What I see is a major role for technology in facilitating the access to services and breaking down on loneliness in these groups. We've done a couple of studies in a rural and an urban area in South Australia. One of the things which we found was this incredibly rapid take‑up of technology among older and disabled people when given the opportunity to do so. I've rushed over quite a bit of that because of the time limitations, but I do want to stress that what we're facing in Australia is a very, very substantial increase in our population living with a disability. To me, it's really crucial that we come to an understanding of the nature of that population, the characteristics, where they live, and what the issues are which they're confronting, because I do believe that the work that you're doing in terms of using modern technology to be able to address some of those issues is very important. I'll leave it there. Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

TERESA CORBIN: OK, everybody. Time for a break. Thank you very much, Professor Graeme Hugo. That was actually very interesting. Let's have a break.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: During the break, there will be an Auslan interpreter available. Just look for the person with the relevant badge, or talk to an ACCAN person.

TERESA CORBIN: We might try to come back by 11:30.