Does Australia Need a Wandering Registry?

A comparative view of the Canadian and United States experience
What is a Wandering Registry?

- It is a *voluntary* client program
- Used to implement a missing person response by emergency services
- The program should not be designed to restrain benign/purposeful wandering
- Intended to respond when normal wandering patterns alter and a client is lost
The Australian Experience to date

- Wandering has not previously been a high priority
- There are a variety of programs available through Alzheimer’s Australia in most states
- Very few are cohesive
- Very little data maintained by state police services
The Canadian Experience

- Canada currently identifies 450,000 people living with a diagnosis of dementia
- Safely Home Program® run by the Alzheimer Society of Canada has 30,000 registered clients.
- Self funded through registration fees $35 (Can)
- Alzheimer Society manage their own database
- Uploaded to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)
Positive Outcomes

- Nationwide response
- Low cost to client/carer
- 15 years experience
- Strength and unity of provincial offices
- Goodwill and strong commitment of RCMP
- High level of client/carer satisfaction reported
- Excellent training programs for police and emergency staff.
Restrictions to Success

- Program until last year was not online – now active due to successful grant funding
- Previous high cost of mail outs to update records - $15,000
- Limitations of the Alzheimer Society /RCMP interface
- Color photo id is not compatible with RCMP
- Limited cultural identifiers
- Free text limitations for dementia specific instructions
United States

- Safe Return program was created in 1993 and introduced by federal legislation
- Project management contracted to the Alzheimer’s Association
- Operational cost deficits identified need for financial partnership arrangements
- MedicAlert® chosen for high profile, long term viability.
Positive Outcomes

- Funding model reduces operational costs
- MedicAlert® maintains 24 hour call centre
- Overcomes state and private police service databases
- Potential to link with Amber Alert and Silver Alert databases.
Restrictions to Success

- Previous dependence on grant monies and frequent reapplication for funding
- Traditionally was not well promoted
- Safe Return not branded for marketing
- Silver Alert – not nationwide
Australia – Potential

- Wandering is currently becoming a renewed community priority
- Canadian & US advice is to not underestimate future growth
- Needs to be part of a community based referral process
- One of a suite of options to be available
- Increasing community comfort with technological interventions
Positive Outcomes to date

- Alzheimer’s Australia has promoted programs in 7 states and territories and either have involvement in these programs or link referrals through their website other service providers
- Victoria – Safe Return – ID assist
- South Australia – Safe Return
- NSW-Safely Home Project
- Northern Territory – Safe Return Program
- Tasmania – Safe Return – ID assist.
- ACT – Red Cross and Australian Federal Police
- WA – Safe 2 Walk
Conclusion

- Australia does need an expanded nationwide response
- Alzheimer’s Australia has a well respected high profile within the community and leadership in this field
- Currently programs are fragmented
- Higher emphasis on early onset diagnosis and forward planning
- Generational attitudinal change to technology
- Fewer clients choosing residential admission
- Need for a cohesive approach to education of Police, Ambulance, Fire and Emergency services
- Must be compatible with other dementia service delivery models
- Don’t leave it until it is too late –
Recommendations

- Need to build a partnership model for long term sustainability
- Benefit from using consistent naming of programs
- Branding of program to make it readily identified and marketable
- Keeping it simple works
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