

ACU health care ethics experts call for radical rethink of aged care

ACU health care ethicists are calling for a fundamental shift in our approach to aged care that puts people before profit.

In the most recent issue of the Medical Journal of Australia, Associate Professor David Kirchhoffer, Associate Professor Bridget Pratt and PhD candidate Lachlan Green have advocated for a rethink that reframes residential aged care homes as parts of social and ecological communities.

Associate Professor Kirchhoffer said a move away from a consumer-driven model would offer innovative solutions to the challenges identified by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

“The Royal Commission has highlighted the urgent need for aged care services to enable people to lead active, meaningful lives in environments that support their dignity, autonomy, and well-being,” he said.

“We are calling for policymakers and aged care providers to apply the principles of social and environmental justice. This new lens highlights the need for sector-wide reform, including changes to funding, access, and care delivery models.”

The researchers are calling for aged care providers to design homes that are integrated into the wider community, connected to the natural environment and allow residents to maintain connections with their social and cultural groups.

“Continuing with a transactional, consumerist model of care limits the potential for aged care reform,” Mr Green said.

“The current system frames residential aged care homes as service providers and residents as consumers, reducing care to a list of tasks that often prioritises physical care over psychological and social well-being.”

The original article in the Medical Journal of Australia, co-authored by ACU’s Associate Professor David Kirchhoffer, Associate Professor Bridget Pratt and PhD candidate Lachlan Green, can be accessed here: <https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.52472>