

# Gerontic National Network

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## Catering to love, sex and intimacy in residential aged care?

A content analysis of information provided to consumers

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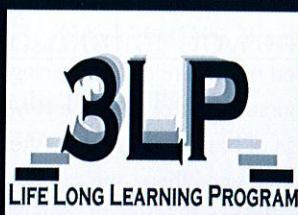
The need for love, sex and intimacy remains important for many older people, including those living in residential aged care facilities (RACF). All RACF utilise information packages to promote their establishment and inform consumers about the facility and the range of services, including the care offered. A census of all RACF in Victoria was conducted to ascertain the extent to

which RACF inform applicants about how they cater for sexual and intimacy needs in the printed information they provide to consumers. Copies of any information available to consumers were requested. Content analysis was used to critically analyse and summarise the characteristics of the information provided. The units of analysis were the words, sentences and pictorial representations used.

Of the 826 facilities contacted, 160 responded to either the initial mail out or to the reminder letter sent after 3 weeks. Of these, 17 facilities representing 2.1% of all facilities contacted, provided material that is made available to prospective residents that addresses the issues of love, sex, intimacy, or the maintenance or establishment of relationships in residential aged care. This material contained 15 textual references, the latter mostly concerned with privacy in general, rather than

sexuality/intimacy needs specifically. Of the 132 facilities that responded but did not return any consumer information, 64% indicated that the primary reason for not returning information was the absence of any relevant material.

It is concluded that the provision of information to prospective residents about issues of sexuality, intimacy, and the maintenance or establishment of relationships is not routine, and moreover relatively uncommon. Sexuality in the nursing home is an issue for both the carer and the resident, and one which needs to be addressed. The challenge for the nursing home staff is to reconcile the needs of the institution with the sexual needs of its residents. One component to having sexually inclusive practices for those residents, for whom it remains important, is the provision of information and the formulation of policies which acknowledge this issue.



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