Anne-Marie changes daily

The word ‘change’ invokes fear in many corporate executives but Anne-Marie Gillard, General Manager of Health and Community Services at ACH Group, deals with change on a daily – and sometimes hourly – basis.

In fact, Anne-Marie joined the major aged care provider in early 2011 while the organisation was undergoing a significant internal restructure.

“It is a very interesting time for aged care at the moment,” she says. “The industry is particularly susceptible to a variety of external factors including changing policies and new technologies, and as a result, the environment in which we operate is continually evolving.

“There is an underlying need for ACH Group to constantly respond to these changes with new workplace models, business practices and skill sets, and to change the way we provide our services to meet the needs of the people we support.

“For example, as part of our recent internal restructure, a specific Innovation Division was created to demonstrate our strategic focus on scanning for and developing future opportunities in the aged care arena.”

Responsible for 685 staff and 23,000 health and community clients in South Australia and Victoria every year, Anne-Marie drives the strategic development and management of ACH Group’s health and community operations.

With risk and financial management, executive leadership, service innovation and development, developing strategic partnerships and ensuring a high level and quality of customer care all falling in her purview, a typical day is atypical.

“It is normal for my daily plan to be frequently adjusted as priorities change, making it difficult to plan for each day. Successfully leading change is one of the most complex challenges I face,” Anne-Marie says.

“However, I believe the many strengths women can bring to executive roles, such as multi-tasking, have been an advantage in my role.

“By placing an emphasis on strong communication pathways, mentoring and coaching, succession planning, development opportunities and strategic planning, I have been able to successfully create high performance teams and implement sound change management across all levels.”

A background in physiotherapy paved the way to her career in aged care and sparked her interest in improving the lives of older people.

“As a physio, I really enjoyed being able to help people recover from injuries and build capacity, subsequently enhancing their lifestyles,” Anne-Marie says. “This seems to be a recurring theme throughout my career as I moved into various positions at aged care providers, and it is now one of the things I love most about working at ACH Group.

“As a team, we strive to address, support and develop the changing needs of older people to ensure they remain in full control of their life, inclusive the aged care services they receive, and remain independent for as long as possible with a focus on living good lives.

“We are working on a number of exciting projects to address this. For example, we are developing a teaching aged care facility in partnership with SA Health and Flinders University to test new service delivery and workforce models that have a teaching and restorative approach.

“We are also focussing on the research of people with dementia in order to further develop and enhance our dementia services and support.

“Being able to improve the lives of older people is incredibly satisfying, and ACH Group has great feedback mechanisms which allow those of us who work ‘behind the scenes’ to see the impact of our work first-hand.”

Anne-Marie’s prominent involvement in the National Carer and Respite Working Group, Aged and Community Services Australia Community Care Work group and the Home and Community Care (HACC) Reform sub-committee has identified her as a leader in aged care.

“Mentoring and coaching our leaders of the future is one of my favourite roles in my current position, as is identifying new opportunities for our next generation,” she says.

“My involvement in industry bodies has enabled me to take a leadership position and influence various policies on behalf of the aged care industry as a whole, as well as keep on top of everything that is happening within the sector.

“On a more personal level, striving to be a strong and positive role model for my two children has given me the drive to succeed in my role. It has given me great pride that my daughter is embarking on a career in health and shown an interest in the aged care industry.”

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