



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Thursday Island nursing home statement

This week, the independent Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency is conducting a Full Review Audit of Star of the Sea to ensure proper resident welfare and safety at the Thursday Island facility at the tip of Cape York.

Torres Strait Home for the Aged and Star of the Sea are co-located. Known locally as "Star of the Sea", it is 40- bed facility comprising 20 high care and 20 low care.

Thursday Island is the northernmost point of Queensland and administrative centre for the Torres Strait Islands with a population of more than 2,200.

Last week, the Department of Health and Ageing received two separate compulsory reports of alleged assaults. Two staff members have been stood down and charged with serious assault. They are scheduled to appear in court on November 11.

"My primary concern is the health and welfare of residents," the Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot said.

"The Department of Health and Ageing is taking the matter seriously. We recognise that it is a very remote facility accessible by sea and plane only, but resident care must always come first," Mrs Elliot said.

Actions taken by the Australian Government include:

- A site visit on October 24 by the Department of Health and Ageing's Complaints Investigation Scheme to investigate whether the nursing home was meeting its responsibilities under the Aged Care Act; and
- A full review audit – commencing on October 27 – by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency. (It would comprise a thorough assessment of the nursing home against 44 accreditation outcomes).

Both, the previous Government and the Rudd Labor Government have been monitoring and supporting the Star of the Sea. Support includes:

- Since January 2007, \$1.2 million in emergency funding was provided to physical improvements, including fire safety, wheelchairs and lifters;
- Appointment of an administrator to help run the facility; and
- In September 2008, Blue Care Queensland was appointed to assist with management and the day-to-day running of the facility as well as improve financial management.

On September 22, the Rudd Government announced the **Indigenous Aged Care plan** to improve the long-term quality of Indigenous aged care. This includes a \$46.2 million program to support care staff and management, provide locum relief and improve facilities as well as carry out emergency works.

In Australia, there are 29 nursing homes with a significant Indigenous population and 30 Indigenous-specific flexible services.

For more information, contact Mrs Elliot's office on (02) 6277 7280