



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Elliot says no to doctors – with interest in nursing homes -- signing death and cremation certificates of their own residents

Australian State and Territory laws should be changed to prohibit doctors – with financial interests in nursing homes – from signing both the death and cremation certificates of their own residents, Federal Minister for Ageing Mrs Justine Elliot said.

Mrs Elliot made the statement yesterday (February 7) after a coroner's inquest in South Australia finding handed down yesterday into the death of a nursing home resident in July 2007.

Mrs Elliot said she would be writing immediately to her ministerial colleague Federal Attorney-General Mr Robert McClelland to ask him to raise the matter with his State and Territory colleagues.

The coroner in South Australia found the death in the Brighton Aged Care should have been reported under the requirements of the Coroner's Act by the attending doctors, Jagdish and Madhu Saraf who were also the approved provider for the home.

The Coroner also found that it was inappropriate for the doctors to sign a death and cremation certificate while having a financial and proprietary interest in the nursing home.

The Coroner recommended amendments to the South Australian Cremation Act 2000 to prohibit this practice.

In light of further evidence from today's coroner's findings and in view of recent sanctions action by the Department of Health and Ageing, the Department is now taking urgent action on the issue of Dr Saraf's suitability to be a provider of aged care.

Mrs Elliot said: "I will seek the assistance of the Federal Attorney-General to consider the national implications of the coroner's recommendation for all States and Territories."

"The Department of Health and Ageing became aware of the death through an investigation under the Complaints Investigation Scheme and referred the matter to the South Australian Police and Medical Board. This referral led to the Coroner's Inquest.

"My thoughts and sympathy go out to the family who must have experienced a very difficult six months after her passing," Mrs Elliot said.

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