



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Improved police checks for aged care facilities

The Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot, today signalled her intention to strengthen the current protocols and protections for nursing home residents.

Currently only staff with unsupervised access to residents are required to have police checks.

Mrs Elliot wants the police checks to be extended to all employed staff from accredited aged care facilities – those who have both supervised and unsupervised access.

Earlier this month, Mrs Elliot asked the Department of Health and Ageing's Office of Aged Care Quality and Compliance to review this area.

On March 1, 2007, the previous government introduced the current "police checks" scheme, however, the guidelines have been found to be inadequate.

These guidelines were prepared by the then-Minister, Senator Santo Santoro, in late-2006 and introduced by the previous minister, Mr Christopher Pyne.

In Australia, there are more than 2,870 accredited nursing homes with 167,070 aged care beds.

More than 116,000 people are employed as direct care workers (nurses, personal carers and allied health workers). (**Source: National Aged Care Workforce Census and Survey February 2004**)

The improved police checks would apply to residential aged care, the Community Care Packages and Extended Aged Care at Home Packages.

In addition, Mrs Elliot has asked the Office of Aged Care Quality and Compliance to write to all of the nation's accredited residential aged care facilities and providers of CCP and EACH packages to inform them of her intention to toughen the guidelines and seek their views.

As part of the development of the guidelines, the Minister has asked the Department of Health and Ageing to consult with the relevant unions and peak body organisations to address any unforeseen implications of the police checks.

Drafting and consultations will mean the new protocols and guidelines could be in place later this year.

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