



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

Statement on South Australian Aged Care facilities – comment to Sunday Mail

The Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot said the Australian Government believes that more can be done to improve aged care in Australia to protect our nation's frail and vulnerable elderly.

"For the past 12 years, the previous government neglected nursing homes and neglected our older Australians; we plan to change that," Mrs Elliot said.

That is why the Australian Government has embarked on a range of measures aimed at further strengthening protections. They include:

- the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency, the independent watchdog, has been instructed to undertake a record 7000 visits – including 3,000 unannounced ones - to nursing homes across the nation (This will started on July 1, 2008.);*
- Expanding the requirement for police checks to be extended to unsupervised staff working in nursing homes;
- Strengthening the powers of the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency;
- Requiring Departmental clinical staff to check on actual residents in a facility as a part of their investigations;
- Reviewing the Aged Care Act to close loopholes and/or make improvements to quality in aged care;
- Requiring aged care homes to report any cases of missing residents; and.
- Asking the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency to review documentation to include a warning to approved aged care providers of offences under the Criminal Codes Act 1995. Giving false or misleading information to the Agency is a serious offence where the Agency is exercising powers or performing functions under, or in connection with, the Aged Care Act 1997.

Mrs Elliot pledged to work in partnership with older Australians, aged care providers, unions and consumer groups to improve the quality in residential aged care and ensure the long-term viability of the sector.

Financial support for Aged Care – South Australia

In Australia, 2,839 nursing homes receive Australian Government subsidies; of those 286 are based in South Australia.

The Australian Government is providing record funding to aged and community care in Australia and South Australia will get its fair share.

Over the next four years nationally, the Rudd Labor Government will invest more than \$40 billion; of that \$28.6 billion will go to nursing homes alone. No Government has invested more into aged and community care.

As for funding in South Australia, data from the Department of Health and Ageing's Budget Management and Financial Policy Section shows:

- Over the next **four** years from 2008-09 to 2011-12, total Commonwealth residential care payments to South Australia will be about \$3.1 billion.
- In 2008-09 alone, South Australian 286 aged care providers will receive more than \$700 million which represents an increase of about 10 per cent over 2007-08. This means that the level of subsidy paid for each resident in care in 2008-09 will more than seven per cent greater than the level of subsidy paid per resident in 2007-08.
- From 1 July 1998 to 1 July 2007, the South Australian subsidy for a Resident Classification Scheme (RCS) 1 client (including CAP) was increased by 38 per cent – an average increase of about 3.6 per cent a year. It increased from \$97.08 a day to \$134 a day over the period.
- The South Australian RCS 1 subsidy at 1 July 1998 was below average and so South Australia has experienced an above average growth rate of Commonwealth funding over the last 10 years; and
- Over the 10 years to June 2007, South Australian aged care providers received a cumulative total of about \$4.3 billion in residential care payments.

***Record 7,000 visits by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency**

From July 1, the Australian Government's Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency will undertake a record 7,000 visits to the nation's nursing homes during 2008-2009.

Australian government policy requires that each Commonwealth-subsidised nursing home receives at least one unannounced visit each year - and more if necessary. This will depend on their accreditation history.

The increased monitoring including unannounced visits assists in the early identification of non-compliance with care standards and helps to ensure that the high standards of care are being met on a consistent basis throughout Australia.

Mrs Elliot said: "Accreditation of Australia's nursing homes are about the health, safety and well being of nursing home residents."

"The overwhelming majority of aged care providers are providing top quality care for our nation's elderly. I have seen world-class facilities and programs in every State and Territory, but I have also seen areas where improvement is needed.

"Staff working in our nation's nursing homes are dedicated, hard working and the backbone of the sector. They are on the front-line providing quality care and these new protections are to complement their care they provide to nursing home residents," Mrs Elliot said.

Details: Walt Secord 0412 234 827 or (02) 6277-7280