



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australian Government pledges to continue to work with community to improve quality for older Australians in aged care

Minister for Ageing Justine Elliot today pledged to continue to work in partnership with older Australians, aged care providers, unions and consumer groups to improve quality in residential aged care.

Last month (March 22), Mrs Elliot announced a range of tough measures to improve quality to protect frail and aged Australians.

As part of the measures, next financial year, the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency, the independent watchdog, has been instructed to undertake a record 7000 announced and unannounced visits to aged care facilities across the nation.

Other measures taken by Mrs Elliot to strengthen the current protocols and protections for nursing home residents include:

- Expanding the requirement for staff to undergo police checks;
- Strengthening the powers of the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency - the independent agency which accredits aged care facilities;
- Requiring clinical staff to check on actual residents in a facility as a part of their investigations; and
- Reviewing the Aged Care Act to close loopholes and/or make improvements to quality in aged care.

“For the past 12 years the Howard Government neglected residential aged care and neglected our seniors. I plan to change that,” Mrs Elliot said.

“While we will not always agree, we will have a dialogue on our plans to improve the quality of aged care for our nation’s seniors.

“I am unapologetic about the tough measures. Australia’s aged care providers in Australia have nothing to fear from the Australian Government’s plans to protect and improve the lives of residents in aged care facilities.

“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.

“I am confident that the aged care industry, and the many older Australians it serves, will see the longer term benefits of a more transparent and accountable aged care industry.

“I welcome comments by the Aged and Community Services Australia (ACSA) chief executive officer, Mr Greg Mundy, who offered to work together, saying there was ‘much common ground’.

“I also recognise that the ACSA offers training in protecting older people and offers assistance on working through police checks for its membership. Last year, it also released policies and procedures to assist their members on elder protection.

“The Government has made a firm commitment to continual improvement in the delivery of aged care and I look forward to working cooperatively with providers and service deliverers to achieve the best outcomes possible for our older population,” Mrs Elliot said.

Aged Care in Australia – the facts

The Department of Health and Ageing oversees more than 2870 accredited nursing homes with 167,070 aged care beds across Australia.

Currently, there are 1.9 million Australians aged 70 and over, comprising 9.3 per cent of the population. Within 40 years the number of people aged over 65 will almost triple, from 2.8 million today to around 7.2 million in 2047, or from around 13 per cent of the population today to over 25 per cent.

Australia is facing a demographic shift. Australians now have one of the world's longest life expectancy rates, outliving Swedes, Norwegians and Finns. Australia will change forever.

An Australian born today can expect to live to reach 80.9 years of age; it is 78.5 years for a man and 83.3 for a woman.

For the last 12 years, the previous Government neglected aged care and the needs of older Australians.

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