



## THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

### Minister for Ageing

#### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### **Commitment to Northern Territory Aged and Community Care**

The Rudd Labor Government is committed to the long-term viability of the Northern Territory's aged care sector and the protection of the Territory's frail and elderly.

The Australian Government has a four-pronged approach, which comprises:

- Record financial support;
- Targeting the \$300 million Zero Real Interest Loans to the Northern Territory;
- Employment programs to support, encourage and retain aged care workers; and
- Practical measures to support urban and very remote services.

In the NT, there are only five aged care providers and 15 separate services providing 465 residential care places. In addition, there are 774 community care packages in the NT allowing people to remain in their own homes with support.

"As a Government, we recognise that there are unique challenges in providing aged care to some of the most remote communities in Australia," the Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot said.

"There have been 12 years of neglect of aged care in the Northern Territory and we are working hard to respond with practical measures.

"I have seen first-hand aged care in communities like Mutitjulu and Kaltukatjara (Docker River) – which is 670 kilometres southwest of Alice Springs by 4WD – and in Katherine and East Arnhem.

"The Northern Territory has unique aged and community care challenges – remote communities and a diverse population," Mrs Elliot said.

In 2008-09, the Australian Government would invest \$64 million in aged and community care in the Northern Territory. That is an 11.8 per cent increase over the previous year's expenditure in the NT.

Over the next four years from 2008-09), the Australian Government will provide \$285 million to the NT to support aged and community care.

**Mrs Elliot said the second round of the \$300 million Zero Real Interest Loans will specifically tackle the challenges in providing aged care services to the Northern Territory.**

(The Department of Health and Ageing reviewed the first stage of the \$300 million commitment and recommended that it target the Northern Territory.)

On average, over the next four years, the Federal Government will provide up to \$43,000 a year for every aged care resident in Australia.

"No Australian Government has invested more into NT aged and community care," Mrs Elliot said.

Mrs Elliot said there is also construction activity in the NT, pointing to the 65 bed service currently being built in Darwin.

In addition, the Australian Government is providing \$46 million to improve aged care through its Indigenous Aged Care Plan announced in September 2008.

The \$46 million Indigenous Aged Care Plan is designed to improve the long-term quality of aged care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The plan includes:

- developing a quality framework to set standards for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program;
- establishing a capital grants program;
- developing a Peer and Professional Support program ; and
- providing an emergency assistance program to give short-term support to eligible care services in a crisis.

Since September, Mrs Elliot has announced a number of practical measures for remote and indigenous aged care services. They include:

- in-principle approval to create eight flexible care beds in Mutitjulu's first permanent overnight aged care service;
- \$1 million grant to Frontier Services to build overnight staff accommodation at Mutitjulu to attract and retain staff;
- an \$800,000 grant to MacDonnell Shire Council to provide additional overnight staff accommodation at Tjilpi Pampaku Ngara (Docker River) Flexible Aged Care service to retain staff at this remote aged care service; and
- in-principle approval to create a 10 place flexible residential aged care service in East Arnhem - following representations at Community Cabinet on July 23 2008.

**Details: please contact the Minister's office on 02 6277 7280.**