



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Minister releases accreditation report by previous government

The Australian Government has reiterated its support for the accreditation of Australia's aged care homes as it is proven to improve the quality of life for 170,000 residents in the nation's 2,870 aged care homes, Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot said.

But Mrs Elliot said the Government was always looking for ways to enhance the system to protect residents and ensure the long-term viability of the sector.

"Make no mistake, accreditation has a positive effect on the lives of older people living in aged care homes – and it is here to stay ... we are willing to listen and consult," Mrs Elliot said.

"In recent months, some providers have expressed concern about increased unannounced inspection visits and our rigorous compliance program to protect residents.

"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," Mrs Elliot said.

Mrs Elliot made the comments upon the release of a report prepared by the previous government last year. (It was a two year project and the 119 page report is available at

www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/ageing-impact-accreditation-reports.htm

The report is "***Evaluation of the impact of accreditation on the delivery of quality of care and quality of life to residents in Australian Government subsidised residential aged care homes***".

The introduction of accreditation was found to have served a number of functions related to quality including to:

- remove under-performing homes from the sector;
- set a minimum standard for quality;
- raise the standards of quality across the sector;
- establish a degree of consistency across the sector; and
- develop a focus on continuous quality improvement and resident-focused care.

The research also found that accreditation has become more positively received by the sector over time with increased experience in successive rounds of accreditation.

Mrs Elliot has asked the Department of Health and Ageing to begin discussions with key aged care stakeholders and representative bodies and to provide advice on issues raised in the report. Currently quality of care is assessed against 44 expected outcomes.

"I am keen to strengthen current accreditation and monitoring processes and support quality improvements. We will continue to work with the aged care sector to ensure that older Australians receive the best possible level of care. This is about working together in partnership and we will consider their views.

The Aged Care Act 1997 was passed to establish a link between quality and expenditure by the Federal Government on residential aged care. Expenditure on residential aged care subsidies was \$5.3 billion in 2005-2006, compared with \$2.5 billion in 1995-1996.

Support for the residential aged care sector has been increased under the Rudd Government. Over the next four years, funding for aged and community care will reach record levels of more than \$40 billion -- with \$28.6 billion of that on residential aged care alone.

"No government in Australian history has spent more on aged care and community care than this one. We are proud of our plans for aged and community care," Mrs Elliot said.

Mrs Elliot said the Australian Government is committed to the long-term viability of Australia's aged care sector and the protection of the nation's frail and elderly.

"The Federal Government is building a modern Australia capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century," Mrs Elliot said.

Caring for our ageing population is one of the major challenges facing our nation this century - and as a Government - we take that responsibility very seriously."

"This is about planning for Australia's future and the challenges of the 21st century.

We want to ensure that older Australians can live independent lives and age in their own homes, but also have the option to enter aged care homes if they need to," Mrs Elliot said.

Mrs Elliot said there was also scope to improve operational aspects of the accreditation process and review the standards.

"The Government is committed to ensuring the highest quality care for people in residential aged care homes.

The evaluation, commissioned by the previous Government in 2004 and undertaken by Campbell Research and Consulting, was in response to recommendations by the Australian National Audit Office and the Australian Parliament's Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit to conduct an evaluation on the impact of accreditation on the quality of care and quality of life in residential aged care.

The evaluation included a comprehensive literature review, a comparative analysis of accreditation systems, broad stakeholder consultations, surveys and preliminary work on potential quality indicators.

A Technical Reference Committee comprising consumer, industry, carer and staff representatives assisted in the evaluation. The reports arising from the evaluation are:

- *Evaluation of the impact of accreditation on the delivery of quality of care and quality of life to residents in Australian Government subsidised residential aged care homes.*
- *A literature review and description of the regulatory framework*
- *Description and comparative analysis of structure, standards, accreditation survey process and outcomes*
- *Report of the Stakeholder Consultations*
- *Comparative survey report*
- *Developing resident-centred quality indicators in residential aged care.*

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