



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

Unannounced visits

Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot today in Federal Parliament detailed the Australian Government's unannounced visits program for the nation's nursing homes, saying they protected frail and aged Australians.

Mrs Elliot called on the Federal Opposition to express its bipartisan support for unannounced visits.

As of July 1, the Accreditation Agency began a program of 7,000 visits including 3,000 unannounced visits and 1,500 site audits.

Currently three of the nine nursing homes in Australia under sanction were identified – through unannounced visits -- by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency.

From July 1 to August 14, the Accreditation Agency and the Department of Health and Ageing have conducted 501 and 178 unannounced visits, respectively.

Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency

NSW/ACT	Victoria	Tasmania	SA/NT	QLD	WA	Total
163	147	18	64	64	45	501

Department of Health and Ageing

NSW/ACT	Victoria	Tasmania	SA/NT	QLD	WA	Total
43	39	6	38	47	5	178

Mrs Elliot said unannounced visits are commonplace in Australia across a range of sectors.

“Unannounced visits are even more important in aged care where frail elderly residents are cared for 24 hours a day and are often unable to speak out if they have concerns about their care,” Mrs Elliot said.

“Unannounced visits give an accurate picture of a facility's day-to-day operation.”

In the case of a nursing home where “serious risk” has been identified, the Accreditation Agency visits daily until the “serious risk” has been removed.

The Department of Health and Ageing will also send Commonwealth Nursing Officers to monitor the quality of care being given to residents.

The Accreditation Agency has a set of “at risk factors” to identify nursing homes for further unannounced visits.

They include:

- Existing non-compliance problems in any of the areas of the 44 standards including nutrition and hydration;
- Number of complaints against a facility;
- known financial difficulties or business restructuring;
- A change of approved provider;
- Major changes in key personnel and senior staff;
- Ambitious building programs; and
- Sudden change in resident population and mix of residents.

“Unannounced visits are all about the health, safety and well being of residents,” Mrs Elliot said.

“I make no apologies for these tough measures.

“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 will continue 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,” Mrs Elliot said.

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