



## **THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP**

### **Minister for Ageing**

#### **MEDIA RELEASE**

April 2, 2009

#### **Australian Government Imposes Sanctions on Cairns Nursing Home**

This week (March 31), the Australian Government imposed sanctions on Dija Meta Aged and Disabled Hostel, a Cairns nursing home – citing serious risk to resident health and safety.

The independent Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency and the Department of Health and Ageing's Commonwealth Nursing Officers identified non-compliance which posed an immediate and severe risk to the health, safety and well-being of residents in the home.

Dija Meta Aged and Disabled Hostel is a 40-bed facility with a mainly Indigenous resident population and it is operated by Aborigines and Islanders Alcohol Relief Services Ltd (AIARS). It currently has 34 residents; of which nine are high care.

The Department of Health and Ageing's issues of concern included:

- Lack of monitoring and provision of appropriate clinical care;
- Lack of suitably qualified and skilled staff;
- Residents at risk of choking because of poorly maintained and inadequate food processing equipment;
- Increased risks of infection because of poorly maintained laundry and cleaning equipment;
- Inadequate waste removal systems leading to increased risks of infection; and
- Lack of effective call system impacting care provision and resident's safety.

The Department has imposed sanctions to ensure that essential activities are undertaken to protect residents' wellbeing.

As part of the Australian Government's response, a range of measures have been put in place including:

- Daily visits by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency staff and Commonwealth Nursing Officers from the Department of Health and Ageing;
- Appointment of an adviser, with nursing experience, approved by the Commonwealth, who has the appropriate skills, qualifications and background to assist the approved provider, AIARS to comply with its responsibilities;
- Appointment of an administrator, approved by the Commonwealth, who has the appropriate skills, qualifications and background to assist the home to comply with its responsibilities; and
- Nursing home is ineligible to receive Australian Government subsidies for any new residents admitted during the period of the sanctions for a period of six months.

In the 2007-2008 financial year, Dija Meta Aged and Disabled Hostel received \$866,605 in recurrent subsidies from the Australian Government.

The Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot said: "This is a very unique service and we want to work together with the staff and families to help Dija Meta Nursing Hostel to provide quality care for their residents."

"We make no apologies for placing a nursing home under sanction as this is about the protection and welfare of frail and aged Australians. We will act when it is necessary.

"The Rudd Labor Government is committed to improving the care and quality of Australia's nursing homes and its residents – after 12 years of neglect by the previous government," Mrs Elliot said.

There are currently sanctions imposed in respect to 12 residential aged care homes – out of 2,830 nursing homes around Australia.

There are around 30 residential aged care services with significant Indigenous populations and 29 Aboriginal flexible aged care services.

Anyone with concerns about the care or welfare of residents should immediately contact the Department of Health and Ageing's Complaints Investigation Scheme on **1 800 550 552**.

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