



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

February 11, 2009

COMMONWEALTH NURSING OFFICER AND COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATION SCHEME OFFICER SENT TO FAR NORTH COAST NURSING HOME AFTER GASTRO OUTBREAK

A Commonwealth Nursing Officer and Complaints Investigation Scheme (CIS) officer undertook an unannounced visit today (February 11) to Bangalor Retreat Nursing Home – after a gastroenteritis outbreak was reported this week.

Yesterday (February 10) the New South Wales Public Health Unit (PHU) advised the CIS of a gastroenteritis outbreak at the nursing home.

As of last night (February 10), 44 residents and 13 staff have been affected with three hospitalisations and the death of a resident – after presenting with gastro symptoms. (The death has been referred to NSW Health, the PHU and the Coroner.)

Bangalor Retreat Nursing Home is currently in lockdown.

Bangalor Retreat is a 101-bed place nursing home in Tweed Heads West on the NSW far north coast. It has five high care and 96 low-care places.

“The welfare and safety of residents is our primary concern,” the Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot said.

“The Department of Health and Ageing is closely monitoring the situation at Bangalor Retreat to ensure that all appropriate actions are being taken.

“Australia’s nursing homes and hostels and their staff provide world-class care and we can never wipe out infectious diseases, but we must always look at new ways to reduce infection,” Mrs Elliot said.

In the 2007-2008 financial year, Bangalor Retreat received \$1.34 million in subsidies from the Federal Government.

Bangalor Retreat had been on a shortened accreditation period to February 2009 due to non-compliance in 13 areas identified by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency in April 2008.

On November 12, 2008, the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency decided to re-accredit the nursing home until February 2010 – based on the nursing home achieving compliance in all 44 standard outcomes.

In November 2008, the Australian Government released the Gastro-Info: Gastroenteritis Kit for Aged Care to support nursing homes and hostels in identifying and managing outbreaks.

In addition, new national guidelines are being developed which specifically focus on norovirus, a common and highly infectious cause of gastroenteritis in nursing homes.

Each year, there are 17 million gastroenteritis cases in Australia – the majority of them are mild. But older and frail people are more susceptible and symptoms are often more severe.

In 2007, there were 1,879 outbreaks of gastroenteritis notified, affecting 37,474 people. Sixty per cent of gastroenteritis outbreaks occurred in nursing homes.

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