



## **THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP**

### **Minister for Ageing**

#### **MEDIA RELEASE**

**10 June 2008**

#### **MINISTER COMMENDS 1.6M-CALLS-A-YEAR HI-TECH CENTRE**

Federal Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot today visited Silver Chain Nursing Association – a WA health and community services provider – congratulating them on their advanced health call service and aged care services.

Mrs Elliot, who was visiting the customer operations centre in Osborne Park, said the call service was at the forefront of technology - handling 1.6 million calls a year.

“Silver Chain Nursing Association is one of the largest providers of community, residential and health services in WA – assisting over 39,000 people each year.

“Silver Chain also operate six residential facilities which provide more than 300 high-care and low-care beds. They also provide palliative care and run four Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres across the state,” Mrs Elliot said.

The Australian Government invested more than \$50 million in 2006-07 towards Silver Chain’s range of services.

Mrs Elliot said the new state of the art Customer Operations Centre operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week - supporting over 80 health service programs in metropolitan and remote areas.

“The customer operations centre carries out more than 1.6 million customer activities, provides for 80,000 customers and services 40 locations across Western Australia.

“Utilising the latest technology, more than 130 staff are able to undertake calls, screenings, referrals, data management and electronic record keeping from one central location.

“This means staff can focus on providing the best services – with tens of thousands of West Australians getting better faster solutions to their health and care needs,” Mrs Elliot said.

Mrs Elliot said the demands on aged care are growing rapidly as a result of Australia’s unprecedented population shift.

Currently, there are 2.7 million Australians aged 65 and over. Within 40 years that number will almost triple to around 7.2 million.

Mrs Elliot said Silver Chain was working alongside government to help Australia meet the challenge of an ageing population.

“The organisation’s work in Home and Community Care is vital to helping older people remain as independent as possible in their own homes, while still being connected to their families and communities.

“Silver Chain is to be congratulated on the delivery of about 1.5 million hours of this kind of care a year,” Mrs Elliot said.

Silver Chain Australia is a finalist in the 2008 Asia Pacific (APAC) Region Contact Center Industry Summit in Sydney on 24 June 2008 for the 'Best Contact Centre'. The Customer Service Council in Western Australia recognised Silver Chain as part of the Service Excellence Awards 2007. Silver Chain received the large business award and the 'Best in the West' award.

**Extra information**

Over the next four years Australian Government's funding for aged and community care would reach record levels of more than \$40 billion – with \$28.6 billion of that on residential aged care alone.

Australian Government funding for community care services like these, announced in last month's Budget, will total \$2.2 billion in 2008-09. That's an increase of \$260 million compared to 2007-08.

The Home and Community Care program will receive over \$1.7 billion in funding from the Commonwealth, state and territory governments for 2008-09, with the Australian Government providing 60 per cent – or just over \$1 billion – in total program funding. This is an increase of more than 8 per cent from the previous year.

Currently, around 600,000 older Australians and their carers receive community aged care services through the Home and Community Care Program jointly funded by the Commonwealth and states and territories.

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