



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP
Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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SANCTIONS IMPOSED: LATROBE PRIVATE NURSING HOME

On the weekend, the Department of Health and Ageing imposed sanctions on Latrobe Private Nursing Home in Melbourne – citing serious risk to its residents identified by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency.

The nursing home had problems in all four accreditation standards and Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency assessors identified concerns with up to 30 out of 44 expected outcomes.

(Latrobe Private Nursing Home is a 30-place high care facility in Alphington, in northern metropolitan Melbourne.)

The approved provider would have an opportunity to respond to the assessors findings. The Accreditation Agency is yet to make a final decision on the total level of non-compliance.

The Accreditation Agency conducted two unannounced visits in mid-October and a comprehensive review audit from 28-30 October.

These visits followed a referral to the Accreditation Agency from the Department of Health and Ageing's Complaints Investigation Scheme (CIS).

The CIS had investigated a number of complaints and made the referrals so that the Accreditation Agency would ascertain whether there were underlying systemic causes of the problems.

The issues identified by the CIS and the Accreditation Agency's own unannounced site visits resulted in a full review audit by the Accreditation Agency on October 28-30. It found:

- Residents were unable to summon assistance;
- Insufficient staff with the appropriate skills/qualifications to meet care needs;
- Meals were inadequate in size, nutrition and variety;
- Medications were not managed appropriately;
- Wounds not attended to or reviewed as required;
- An unsafe physical environment – compromising fire safety and the safety of residents mobility;
- Six staff were identified as not having current police checks;
- Failure to report alleged assaults within the required 24-hour legislated time-frame; and
- Doors and gates leading to evacuation assembly points being locked and keys unable to be located.

(Cont)

In response to the serious concerns, the Department of Health and Ageing has taken a number of measures to improve resident care, including:

- Revocation of approved provider status unless the approved provider appoints an Administrator, with the proper clinical skills, qualifications and experience, for a period of six months;
- Cessation of Commonwealth subsidy for new residents for six months;
- Accreditation Agency will visit the home each day while serious risk is present;
- Department of Health and Ageing will continue to closely monitor the nursing home to check that action is taken promptly by provider; and
- Sanctions would run until April 30, 2009.

The Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot said “The care and welfare of residents is our primary concern – they come first.”

“There are nearly 3000 nursing homes in Australia and the vast majority are doing an excellent job providing quality care for older Australians, but when action is required this Government will move swiftly.

“Nursing home operators have a legal and moral obligation to provide proper care for nursing home residents,” Mrs Elliot said.

Under the Aged Care Act, nursing homes are currently required to conduct police checks on staff with unsupervised access to residents. On October 21, Mrs Elliot announced plans to further strengthen police checks for aged care staff by as early as January 1, 2009.

The Australian Government is undertaking a record 7,000 visits – including 3,000 unannounced visits -- by the Accreditation Agency to the nation’s nursing homes to ensure the quality of care, including nutrition and hydration.

From the period July 1 to October 31, the Accreditation Agency has conducted 1289 unannounced visits including 378 in Victoria. In addition, during the same period, the Department of Health and Ageing has conducted 519 unannounced visits including 127 in Victoria.

Currently, there are 14 nursing homes under sanction out of a total of nearly 3,000 aged care homes around Australia.

Since 1 July, there have been seven instances where sanctions have been imposed as a direct or indirect result of unannounced visits.

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

For more information, contact Minister Elliot’s office on (02) 6277 7280