



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

October 21, 2008

Aged care police checks – in place as early as January 1

The Australian Government plans to introduce police checks for all nursing home staff – as early as January 1, 2009.

On March 1, 2007, the previous Government introduced the current police checks system that only applied to staff with unsupervised access.

On February 21, 2008, Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot announced that police checks would be extended to all staff regardless of whether they have supervised or unsupervised access to residents.

This would affect staff of accredited aged care facilities, and those delivering community care packages for example Extended Aged Care at Home (EACH) and EACH Dementia.

A police check for aged care staff will be a national requirement obtained from State/Territory Police, the Australian Federal Police or through direct application to CrimTrac – the agency which is used by all police jurisdictions to obtain information on an individual's criminal history.

Since February, there has been extensive consultation. The Aged Care Consultative Committee, aged care associations and providers, peak bodies, unions and government departments, including the Australian Federal Police have all been consulted.

During the consultation process, industry groups indicated to the Department of Health and Ageing that many providers already have all employees under go police checks.

More than 116,000 people are employed as direct care workers (nurses, personal carers and allied health workers. (Source: National Aged Care Workforce Census and Survey February 2004)

Last week (October 16), the Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot introduced the Aged Care Amendment (2008 Measures No 2) Bill 2008 into the Federal parliament. The police checks would occur under the Accountability Principles of the legislation.

"This is about protecting the most vulnerable members of our society – the frail and aged," Mrs Elliot said.

"The Australian Government is committed to ensuring older Australians in nursing homes and hostels receive quality care in a safe and secure environment.

"This is about preventing people with serious criminal convictions working with frail and aged people."

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