



**THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP**  
**Minister for Ageing**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Record number of visits begin on July 1 – nursing homes**

From July 1, the Australian Government's Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency – the independent watchdog – will undertake a record 7,000 visits to the nation's 2,870 nursing homes during 2008-2009.

Australian government policy requires that each Commonwealth-subsidised nursing home receives at least one unannounced visit each year - and more if necessary. This will depend on their accreditation, quality and compliance history.

**In 2008-2009, the Accreditation Agency would conduct at least 7,000 visits; of which more than 3000 will be unannounced.**

The increased monitoring including unannounced visits assists in the early identification of non-compliance with care standards and helps to ensure that the high standards of care are being met on a consistent basis throughout Australia.

Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot said: "Make no mistake, accreditation of Australia's nursing homes is about the health, safety and well being of residents."

"Staff working in our nation's nursing homes are dedicated, hard working and the backbone of the sector. They are on the front-line providing quality care; these visits support their important work," Mrs Elliot said.

The Agency advises that they will – if possible – take into account key events and absence of key staff in the scheduling of an unannounced visit, however, when there is any concern about the health, safety and well-being of residents – visits will take place.

These visits also assist in allaying public concerns that the standards of care at the time of accreditation are maintained throughout the period that a home is accredited, and not just in anticipation of an Agency visit.

Earlier this month, the Agency told nursing homes to advise that if they have plans to conduct conferences or special cultural activities such as faith-based activities and birthday celebrations that require the involvement of key personnel of the home that they notify the Agency of these dates.

In such circumstances, no harm is done if the Agency schedules an unannounced visit a day or two later. Again, such a decision would not be known to the nursing home.

The Agency has made it clear to approved providers that it is not possible to guarantee they will not visit, however, the Agency's intention is that when they are aware of these events they will work around this, but only where this will not compromise the health, safety or well-being of residents.

The Agency's policy is that, unless there is an important reason for visiting a home, they will not schedule unannounced visits on days that they know relevant key personnel will not be available.

Mrs Elliot said the 7,000 visits complements Australian Government's record funding to aged and community care.

"Over the next four years, the Rudd Labor Government will invest more than \$40 billion -- \$28.6 billion of that in nursing homes alone. No Government has invested more into aged and community care," she said.

Mrs Elliot pledged to work in partnership with older Australians, aged care providers, unions and consumer groups to improve the quality in residential aged care and ensure the long-term viability of the sector.

"For the past 12 years, the previous government neglected nursing homes and neglected our older Australians; we plan to change that.

"While we will not always agree, we will have a dialogue on our plans to improve the quality of aged care for our nation's older citizens.

"The overwhelming majority of aged care providers are providing top quality care for our nation's elderly. I have seen world-class facilities and programs in every State and Territory, but I have also seen areas where improvement is needed.

"I am confident that the aged care industry and the many older Australians it serves will see the longer term benefits of a more transparent and accountable aged care industry," Mrs Elliot said.

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