



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP
Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Bridgewater update – Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency report

The Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot, today said the Department of Health and Ageing and the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency will continue to monitor the care of residents in the Bridgewater Aged Care Service in Melbourne.

Mrs Elliot made the statement after the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency released a review audit report into the facility.

The independent report, completed on May 30, 2008 found that the home was non-compliant in 18 of the 44 outcomes including clinical care and its period of accreditation has been shortened to December 16, 2008.

Last month, the Australian Government entered into an agreement with mission-based not for profit provider, Uniting Aged Care to temporarily take over the running of Bridgewater and the care for its 92 residents until the future of the facility is determined.

Uniting Aged Care is working to address the non-compliance identified when the home was operated by its previous owner, Vitality Care Commissioning Pty Ltd.

This followed the financial collapse of the nursing home on May 23 and the appointment of administrators - Stephen Longley, David McEvoy and Tim Cuming from PricewaterhouseCoopers. They are investigating the financial affairs of the former approved provider of the home (Vitality Care) and seeking a sale of the facility.

If the administrators determine that the sale cannot proceed, the residents would have to be re-located to other nearby facilities. In July, the Australian Government prepared a re-location plan, if required.

“The welfare and care of the residents is our primary concern. I am also concerned to ensure that staff are supported and looked after. That is why we are working with Uniting Aged Care to ensure that residents of Bridgewater continue to receive the high standard of care they deserve,” Mrs Elliot said.

“The engagement of Uniting Aged Care will also benefit the employees of Bridgewater who will be able to continue to deliver quality aged care confident that their salary, wages and other employee entitlements will continue to be met.

If the provider becomes insolvent, the Accommodation Bond Guarantee Scheme will protect all bonds held by Bridgewater. This protection extends beyond all current residents to those that have departed the home but are still to receive the refund owed to them.

“Uniting Aged Care has extensive experience in the delivery of aged care in Victoria. They currently operate a number of residential aged care services and care for several hundred residents across the state.”

Officers from the Department of Health and Ageing and the administrators will continue to work closely with Uniting Aged Care and keep staff, their representatives and unions, and residents and their families informed of developments.”

The agreement with Uniting Aged Care is the latest in a number of steps the Rudd Government has taken to protect the residents and staff at Bridgewater Aged Care since Vitality Care went into administration. These have included:

- the appointment and funding of a clinical nurse adviser team to assist the administrators to maintain quality of care;
- reimbursement of the administrators for paying staff salaries and wages owed prior to 23 May 2008;
- funding for the administrators to cover liabilities directly incurred in connection with the continued operation of Bridgewater, professional fees directly associated with the administrators’ responsibilities in operating Bridgewater and expenses directly associated with the investigation of the accommodation bond balances; and
- the appointment of case managers for each resident and their family to provide information and assistance.

The Department of Health and Ageing and the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency are working closely with the home to ensure that the care and wellbeing of residents are maintained.

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