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Government must address aged care complaints – ACSA and ACS SA & NT

Four Corner's portrayal of the distressing circumstances of four families with parents in aged care facilities has served to highlight the failings of the residential care complaints system.

Aged and Community Services Australia (ACSA) CEO Greg Mundy said it was unfortunate that families were compelled to seek media coverage to have their concerns addressed.

"The aged care industry has consistently alerted the Government to the inadequacies of the current complaints investigation system," Mr Mundy said.

"Last year the National Aged Care Alliance, comprising all the stakeholders in aged care - providers, consumers, professional groups and unions - proposed the process be redesigned to provide a positive opportunity to resolve problems and improve the delivery of aged care services through an independent body.

"The recent Senate report into residential and community aged care recognised the enormity of the problems facing the industry including the costs associated with meeting regulation standards and delivering care.

"These calls have gone unheeded and the aged-care industry continues to buckle under the pressure of inadequate funding which impacts on providers' ability to attract and retain staff and ensure optimum hours of personal care.

"There are 2,830 aged care facilities in Australia (300 in South Australia and 15 in the Northern Territory). They are well run and the many thousands of residents are happy and well cared for by professional staff.

"But the Government must take its responsibility seriously and ensure adequate funding so that all older Australians can enjoy a quality of life of which can all be proud. A punitive complaints system, which fails to properly address issues of concern for residents and providers, is simply another burden for everyone involved including residents, families and providers.

"Australians can and do have faith in aged care facilities but that may continue to be challenged if the Government fails to address fundamental concerns relating to funding and therefore staffing and ultimately residents' care."

ACSA represents more than 1,100 church, charitable and community based organisations providing accommodation and care services to more than 700,000 older Australians, people with a disability and their carers.

ACS SA & NT represents the majority of community care, residential care and retirement housing organisations that provide aged care services to an estimated 100,000 older South Australians and Northern Territorians, their carers and families. ACS SA & NT has more than 130 members providing over 600 separate services.

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