



Dear Senator

As someone with a keen interest in social policy and the welfare of older Australians you may have seen the ABC Four Corners program this week (1/6/2009) about the aged care complaints system.

The program highlighted some serious shortcomings in the current Complaints Investigation Scheme (CIS). As the CEO of the major peak body for the aged care industry, I felt compelled to draw your attention to the industry's position on the CIS to ensure you have a balanced account of the system. I am seeking your support to not only address the shortcomings in the complaints system but also the more fundamental issues impacting on the quality of care for older people.

I have attached a basic fact sheet on the aged care industry and the CIS for your information. It is important to note that the aged care industry cares for over a million people per year, in either residential care or their own homes, mostly without incident. We are the 9th largest employer in the country and spend approximately 75% of all funding received on our staff. Despite this, and as a result of grossly inadequate Government funding, our dedicated aged care professionals in residential care earn up to 20% less than their counterparts in the public hospital system.

The aged care industry has consistently alerted the Government to the inadequacies of the CIS. It is a punitive complaints system, which fails to properly address issues of concern for residents and providers alike. As an industry we believe an independent complaints authority and arbitration system is imperative to improve access, due process, transparency and the ability to properly manage issues arising in aged care. Such a system has the support of all stakeholders including consumer groups.

At the heart of the difficulties being experienced by residents, families and aged care providers themselves is a disturbing lack of focus on aged care by the Government. The recent Senate report into residential and community aged care recognised the enormity of the problems facing the industry including the costs of care delivery and those associated with meeting regulatory standards. This inquiry, previous reports including one by the Productivity Commission, and ongoing industry demands have been unable to prompt the Government into action.

We have an ageing population. Aged care should be part of the Government's vision for Australia's future – sadly it is not.

While debate about aged-care goes on the industry continues to buckle under the pressure of inadequate funding. This situation can not be tolerated.

We need your support to reinforce the critical importance of aged care in Australia. Australia can and should be proud of its aged care services today, but tomorrow will be a different story if we don't act now.

Yours sincerely

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