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Government of South Australia
SA Health

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Dear Mr Graham

RE: SA HEALTH SMOKE FREE POLICY RESPONSE TO AGED AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Thank you for your letter dated 9 June 2010 regarding the introduction of the SA Health Smoke-free Health Services policy and the implications for residents in Commonwealth funded residential aged care facilities.

The policy came into effect on 31 May 2010 with smoking prohibited at all South Australian public health services, including hospitals, hospital grounds and health service buildings.

The policy recognises that active and passive smoking is hazardous to health, and that all those who enter health service premises should be protected from the involuntary inhalation of tobacco smoke (passive smoking). It also makes provisions for supporting smoking cessation among consumers of SA Health services and SA Health staff.

Following feedback on the policy it was highlighted that some sectors, namely inpatient mental health and country aged care services, had concerns about achieving full compliance with the policy by 31 May 2010. As a result, a temporary six month exemption has been provided to health services which have exceptional circumstances preventing them from implementing completely smoke-free environments.

A temporary exemption entitles a facility to nominate and use a designated outdoor smoking area. However the exemption does not remove the responsibility to implement and enforce all other components of the policy. Over the six month exemption period, these services will complete stakeholder consultations, develop mitigation strategies and provide reports on their progress towards achieving full compliance with the policy by 30 November 2010.

Country Health SA, as the approved provider of Commonwealth funded residential aged care facilities across country South Australia, has established a Smoke-free Implementation Working Group. This group is currently working towards the

development of strategies which consider the balance between all residents' rights for an environment free of tobacco smoke, and appropriate support for those residents who wish to address their tobacco smoking. This latter approach will be in consultation with families and carers of residents who currently smoke.

With regard to the issue you raise concerning the jurisdiction of Commonwealth funded residential aged care facilities in South Australia, the introduction of the *Health Care Act* on 1 July 2008 saw the establishment of Country Health SA Hospital Incorporated. As the approved provider, Country Health SA is the one governance body for all Commonwealth funded residential aged care facilities across country South Australia. Therefore these facilities fall within the definition of 'incorporated hospital' and are required to adhere to all SA Health policies.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue and ongoing advocacy for aged care residents. SA Health welcomes the continued dialogue with Aged and Community Services to aid improvements for all clients across South Australia.

Should you have any questions regarding the transition to Smoke-free implementation, please contact, Mr Roger Kirchner, Director, Country Health SA on telephone (08) 8638 4575.

Yours sincerely



DR TONY SHERBON
Chief Executive

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