



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

gpscno3@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Inquiry into registered nurses in New South Wales nursing homes

As you would be aware, I provided evidence to the Committee on Wednesday 5 August 2015 about complaints to the Aged Care Complaints Scheme in relation to NSW residential aged care facilities. I am concerned that members of the Committee may form an incorrect view of the evidence and its context from subsequent reports in the media.

Complaints data is, by its nature, subjective and is not evidence of a failure on the part of a residential aged care facility. It reflects an individual concern raised by a member of the public about a matter. The Department's focus is on resolving these concerns for the resident. Accordingly, the Department is not able to provide any advice on the occurrence of providers failing to have adequate numbers of staff or adequately skilled staff.

Where the Department does have concerns, based on its examination of a complaint, that a matter (for example staffing numbers and qualifications) raises systemic issues in relation to the facility, it refers these matters to the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency (Quality Agency) to consider in its monitoring of providers.

I would particularly like to highlight and expand on the evidence I provided to the Committee on the level of complaints about staff numbers and staff training/skills/qualifications in NSW residential aged care facilities that:

- The number of complaints received about staff numbers as a proportion of allocated places was the second highest across all States and Territories in the 25 month period between 1 May 2013 and 27 May 2015. This represents approximately 1.6 complaints about staffing levels per 1000 places per year.
- The number of complaints received about staff training/skills/qualifications as a proportion of allocated places was the fourth highest across all States and Territories in the same period. I would now like to correct this to say that they were the fifth highest, that is lower than previously stated.

I would also like to reiterate evidence provided at the hearing that:

- Data held by the Aged Care Complaints Scheme is drawn from a system designed to support complaints resolution, not to support statistical analysis, and neglects judgements about the classification of a complaint.
- The data indicates a greater number of complaints about staffing numbers than about qualifications of staff, such as the presence of registered nurses. However, as indicated

above, this does not provide a basis to make conclusions about the number of providers failing to have adequate numbers of staff or adequately skilled staff.

Yours sincerely

Michael Culhane
Branch Manager
Quality and Regulatory Policy Branch
Access, Quality and Compliance Group

10 August 2015