

27 September 2018

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By online submission

Dear Committee Secretary

Re: Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Bill 2018 and related Bill

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Bill 2018 and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2018.

The RANZCP is the principal organisation representing the medical speciality of psychiatry in Australia and New Zealand and is responsible for training, educating and representing psychiatrists on policy issues. The RANZCP has over 6000 members including more than 4000 qualified psychiatrists, many of whom have specific interest and expertise relevant to this inquiry. The RANZCP is guided on policy matters by a range of expert committees, including the Faculty of Psychiatry of Old Age.

Good mental health is essential to healthy ageing, and older people require the same full spectrum of mental health interventions as other people, from prevention to early intervention and clinical care. The RANZCP advocates for a holistic, age and culturally appropriate approach to addressing mental illness in older people, informed by the principles of recovery, independence, dignity and quality of life. The RANZCP's views on this area are set out in [RANZCP Position Statement 22: Psychiatry services for older people](#) (2015).

The RANZCP recognises that – given the increasing proportion of Australians who are over 65 years of age – it is essential that aged care services are safe, appropriate, high quality and focused on consumer outcomes. This should be accompanied by transparency around practices and outcomes. Recently however, there have been a number of serious failings in the care provided by the aged care sector, whereby such failings, which were longstanding, unfolded into serious incidents. These issues can have severe repercussions on consumer outcomes, and indicate that significant reform is needed for the aged care sector. In particular, reforms need to build an aged care sector that is driven by consumer feedback and choice, based on principles similar to the US Centres for Medicare and Medicaid Services, 'Five-Star Quality Rating System'. The College notes that the current Aged Care Complaints Commissioner Annual Report 2016–2017 demonstrated that 78% of complaints were about residential aged care.

As part of the reform to better manage and prevent serious failings in the sector, the RANZCP supports the establishment of the new Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, as outlined in the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Bill 2018. It is crucial that the work of the Commission is supported by significant funding and resources to ensure that it can adequately manage the issues that have arisen in aged care in Australia. It is important that the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission is not simply a rebranded version of the old complaints system.

It is important that, following the establishment of the Commission, the Federal government continue to invest in improving aged care services in Australia. While the establishment of the new Commission is a step in the right direction, serious consideration needs to be given to other parts of the sector which require significant overhaul. One aspect of this is the implementation of staffing ratios, which the RANZCP believes need to be reconsidered. All changes in this sector should prioritise patient safety and good health outcomes, and the RANZCP looks forward to providing further input to reform in aged care in Australia.

If you would like to discuss any of the issues raised in the submission, please contact Rosie Forster, Executive Manager, Practice, Policy and Partnerships via rosie.forster@ranzcp.org or by phone on (03) 9601 4943.

Yours sincerely

Dr Kym Jenkins
President

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