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National Dementia Helpline
1800 100 500

17 December 2018

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

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Dear Committee members,

Dementia Australia welcomes the invitation to provide a supplementary submission to the Standing Committee on Community Affairs Inquiry into the ***Effectiveness of the aged care quality assessment and accreditation framework for protecting residents from abuse and poor practices, and ensuring proper clinical and medical care standards are maintained and practised.***

Dementia Australia (under our former name, Alzheimer's Australia) provided a submission to the first phase of this inquiry in August 2017. The August 2017 submission, which addressed each of the seven terms of reference, provided a list of recommendations related to improving the safety and quality of people living with dementia. Also embedded in the submission, and still valid to this stage of the Inquiry, are many case studies that provide deep insights into the issues faced by people living with dementia, their families and carers whilst in care, as well as the views of staff and key stakeholders involved in aged care.

These issues and recommendations spanned the key themes of:

- Increasing consumer consultation, including people living with dementia, throughout the accreditation process.
- A dementia focus to be embedded across the aged care regulatory framework.
- The requirement of more extensive background checks for all aged care staff.
- The need for a cohesive, structured and integrated national approach to dementia training and education.
- The need for strategies to identify issues that may be contributing to behavioural symptoms of dementia within the residential care context.
- Improved access to information and support for end-of-life considerations and pain management for people living with dementia.

Dementia Australia urges the committee to revisit its original submission and take into account these recommendations and case studies. An underpinning principle highlighted in the submission, and one which warrants repeating here, is the critical importance of equipping approved providers of aged care with the support and training to provide safe, high quality care for people living with dementia. Only through this focus can we ensure that dementia care will truly become 'core business' for the aged care sector.

Since Dementia Australia's original submission there have been a number of reforms which are intended to change the current regulatory landscape of provider focused criteria to one of consumer centricity. These include:



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- The new Safety and Quality Commission, which comes into effect on 1 January 2019, and which will provide the sector (particularly consumers) with a unilateral point of contact for regulatory and compliance functions. Dementia Australia looks forward to working with the Commission to ensure people impacted by dementia are aware of its role and function in the regulatory landscape.
- The recently legislated single Aged Care Quality Standards, which are also designed to place the consumer at the centre of quality and accreditation processes. It is currently unclear how providers will respond to and incorporate the new standards into their practices, but it is vital that providers, as well as assessors from the Quality and Safety Commission, are equipped to address the needs of people living with dementia. It is also imperative that people living with dementia, their carers and representatives have the opportunity to feed into the consumer experience reports which will contribute to the process of accreditation.
- *The Matter of Care* report released in June 2018 by the Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce, which highlights dementia care as a workforce competency gap.¹
- The review of the Aged Care Act (Staffing Ratio Disclosure) Bill 2018 by House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport, which specifies that, 'having a sufficient number of well trained staff is a crucial element in the provision of quality care in aged care facilities'. Dementia Australia considers that the introduction of mandating disclosure of a range of staffing positions will greatly allay the fears which many consumers and carers face when they access residential aged care. As one family member commented,

I think a facility needs to have enough staff there to look after a person, so they can take the time to get to know the person, get to know their habits good and bad. Get to know them well enough so that if there's a small problem, they can spot it before it becomes an enormous problem.

Carer of a person with dementia

It is also worth noting that Dementia Australia has also recently released its Strategic Direction 2018-2023, *Designing a new future*, which identifies the three key issues which face people living with dementia, their families and carers. Of note for the scope of this Inquiry is the focus on quality of dementia care. Dementia Australia will develop baseline standards of care and work with selected organisations, advocates and industry towards achieving this.

If you would like further information on this initiative as it progresses, or any of the other points made in this or previous submissions, Dementia Australia is available to discuss any of the points raised and looks forward to working with government on improving the quality of life and care for people living with dementia.

Yours sincerely,

Maree McCabe
CEO Dementia Australia

¹ Department of Health, *A Matter of Care Report*, June 2018, p. 36.