

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Terms of reference

1.1 On 23 June 2004 the Senate referred the following matters to the Committee for inquiry and report by 30 September 2004:

(a) the adequacy of current proposals, including those in the 2004 Budget, in overcoming aged care workforce shortages and training;

(b) the performance and effectiveness of the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency in:

(i) assessing and monitoring care, health and safety,

(ii) identifying best practice and providing information, education and training to aged care facilities, and

(iii) implementing and monitoring accreditation in a manner which reduces the administrative and paperwork demands on staff;

(c) the appropriateness of young people with disabilities being accommodated in residential aged care facilities and the extent to which residents with special needs, such as dementia, mental illness or specific conditions are met under current funding arrangements;

(d) the adequacy of Home and Community Care programs in meeting the current and projected needs of the elderly; and

(e) the effectiveness of current arrangements for the transition of the elderly from acute hospital settings to aged care settings or back to the community.

1.2 On 1 December 2004 the Senate agreed to the Committee's recommendation that the reference, not disposed of at the end of the 40th Parliament, be re-adopted with a reporting date of 23 June 2005.

### Conduct of the inquiry

1.3 The inquiry was advertised in *The Australian* and on the Internet. The Committee invited submissions from Commonwealth and State Government departments and other interested organisations and individuals.

1.4 The Committee received 243 public submissions and 10 confidential submissions. A list of individuals and organisations who made a public submission or provided other information that was authorised for publication by the Committee is at Appendix 1.

1.5 The Committee held nine days of public hearings in Sydney – 19.8.04 and 11.3.05; Canberra – 11.2.05; Adelaide – 22.2.05; Perth 23.2.05; Brisbane – 18.3.05; Melbourne 26.4.05 and 27.4.05; and Hobart – 28.4.05. Witnesses who give evidence at the hearings are listed in Appendix 2. The Committee was pleased to undertake interesting and valuable inspections in Perth and Melbourne. In Perth, the Committee had the opportunity to visit the Multiple Sclerosis Society Wilson administration Centre and the 'Fern River' accommodation complex also at Wilson; the Brightwater Care Group facility for people with Huntington's Disease Ellison House in Carlisle and a group house in Maylands for people with Acquired Brain Injury. In Melbourne, the Committee visited the Multiple Sclerosis Society house in Carnegie that was a project developed with the assistance of Innovative Pool funding.

### **Acknowledgements**

1.6 The Committee would like to record its thanks to Sue Shapland, Senior Manager of the MS Society WA; Janet Wagland, Services Manager for Younger People with the Brightwater Care Group; Lindsay McMillan, CEO and Alan Blackwood, Manager MS Society of Victoria; and Bronwyn Morkham, National Director National Alliance of Young People in Nursing Homes, who arranged the inspections of the respective facilities and who, in combination with other staff, accompanied the Committee members to explain the establishment, administration and operation of the facilities.

1.7 The Committee would like to particularly express its appreciation and gratitude to the residents of the different facilities that were inspected who permitted the Committee to visit their home and meet and talk with them.

1.8 The Committee also thanks the many individuals and groups who provided submissions that were such a valuable part of the inquiry including those who described the variable quality of care provided to their elderly family members. The Committee especially thanks the many individuals and family members who wrote submissions or appeared at the hearings and contributed very moving descriptions of their loved ones with disabilities either being accommodated in aged care facilities or being faced with that prospect due to the lack of alternative appropriate care.

1.9 These many graphic and poignant personal testimonies reinforced the Committee's view of the total unacceptability of placing younger people with disabilities into residential aged care facilities.