

Media Release

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For immediate release



ACSA SUPPORTS POLICE CHECKS FOR AGED CARE STAFF

Australia's peak aged care body, Aged and Community Services Australia (ACSA), today welcomed the announcement by the Federal Government of the introduction of police checks for aged care staff and volunteers.

"Many aged care providers already routinely undertake police checks as part of their pre-employment process and today's announcement will ensure this becomes an industry standard" said Pat Sparrow, ACSA Acting Chief Executive Officer.

Ms Sparrow said it was important that adequate resources were made available to cover the costs of this system and to ensure that police checks were provided in a timely manner.

ACSA, which represents about two-thirds of Australia's aged and community care providers, called on the Government to widen its plan for volunteers. "Government funding for police checks for volunteers in the Community Visitors scheme is welcomed but this should be extended to cover the many other volunteers in aged care services," Ms Sparrow said.

Federal Minister for Ageing, Santo Santoro today also announced an increase in spot checks by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency.

"Spot checks are already part of the current aged care accreditation system. Increasing the number of spot checks alone will have limited impact on the prevention of abuse," Ms Sparrow said. "An increase in targeted checks, with a focus on ensuring that homes have appropriate processes and procedures in place to address abuse issues may assist in improving and refining existing practices," she said.

ACSA welcomed the Minister's consideration of proposals to boost the investigative power of the Aged Care Complaints Resolution. "The industry has long supported the strengthening of this Scheme by providing it with independence and investigative powers," Ms Sparrow said.

"While abuse of older people in aged care homes is rare, every instance needs to be fully investigated to provide the best possible outcome for the resident, their families and the aged care provider. It will be important that in any reform of the scheme the capacity for mediation on less serious issues is retained where appropriate," she said.

Other measures still being considered include mandatory reporting which ACSA does not believe will make aged care safer.

ACSA looks forward to continuing to work with Minister Santoro to further improve on the already excellent care provided to older people living in residential aged care homes.

ACSA represents more than 1,200 church, charitable and community-based organisations providing housing, supported accommodation and community care services to around half a million older Australians, people with a disability and their carers.

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