

Townville  
Qld  
4814

11th June 2010

Productivity Commission Aged Care  
GPO Box 1428  
CANBERRA CITY  
A.C.T. Australia 2601

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re : A PROPOSAL TO REGISTER CERTIFICATE 3 AGED CARE PERSONAL CARE WORKERS**

### **Background**

Our mother became a resident of a nursing home in January 2009. We became aware of a personal care worker acting inappropriately toward our mother in August 2009. Through this incident and the investigation of it, we realised that there is no registration body for Personal Care Workers. It is possible for a Personal Care Worker to move without penalty from one job to another in the same field without restriction under current arrangements. It is our objective to lobby as widely as possible to amend this situation.

### **Registration of Personal Care Workers**

***A body to govern the registration of Personal Care Workers needs to be set up to cover these aspects of the careers of PCWs :***

- ***Criminal history checks. These are currently known as the Blue Card or Police Checks. Workers applying for jobs are asked to ensure they have one.***
- ***English language requirements. Many workers in this industry have English as a second language so a level of understanding English would be seen as essential.***
- ***Requirements for continuing professional development and training. Work in the Health Care field is changing as new techniques and appliances become available. There is a need for workers to be trained continuously as part of their participation in the work force.***
- ***Records of recent practice. The regulatory body would hold work records of the registered workers. This will provide a complete work history of individual Personal Care Workers.***
- ***Professional Indemnity Insurance. The regulatory body would provide this insurance as part of its charter to the registered workers.***

In an article published in "The Age" on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2010, the Federal Minister for Health, Ms. Nicola Roxon said that Nursing Home assaults had increased by 50% in the last 12 months and sexual assaults jumped 36%. She expressed horror at this explosive jump in reported cases. By registering Personal Care Workers, we are going some way towards ensuring that only professionally qualified Personal Care Workers continue in the system.

On 1st April 2010, the Hon John Hill, Minister for Health, South Australia, in his capacity as Chair of the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council, announced the approval of National Health Practitioner Registration Standards which are due to become **effective from 1st July 2010**. These standards were recommended by the ten National Boards established under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. In essence the scheme consists of :

- A suite of mandatory registration standards, submitted by National Boards, that will apply to all health practitioners registered under the national scheme.
- A series of board-specific registration standards relating to limited registration for medical practitioners, examinations for general registration for pharmacists, supervised practice for pharmacists, general registration for psychologists, and provisional registration for psychologists.

- Specialist registration standards, including approved lists of specialties and protected specialist titles, for medical specialists, dental specialists, and podiatric surgeons.
- A series of board-specific area of practice endorsements for suitably qualified dentists (conscious sedation), endorsement of nurse practitioners, and endorsement of seven areas of practice for suitably qualified psychologists.
- Standards for scheduled medicines endorsements for suitably qualified and registered optometrists, podiatrists, and rural and isolated practice registered nurses.

In approving the registration standards, Ministers noted that the respective National Boards will monitor their application to health practitioners under the national scheme, and be mindful of the need to review the approved registration standards every 3 years or earlier, should that prove necessary in the interests of the provision of professional health services to all Australians. Within this National registration and Accreditation scheme, mandatory registration standards consist of 5 components listed below.

- Criminal history
- English language
- Professional indemnity insurance
- Continuing professional development
- Recency of practice

[Cited from *Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council Communiqué – 1 April 2010*]

It seems clear that these major reforms in the Health Practitioner Registration Standards should be extended to Personal Health Care Workers.

We note that PCWs carry heavy workloads and shift work is usually included. Currently, PCWs may hold Certificates in Aged/Community/Disability Care, First Aid and CPR qualifications, and sometimes a driver's licence is required. A Police Check is mandatory too. Personal Care Workers perform a wide variety of tasks and they are entrusted to care for the most vulnerable members of our community. We need to regulate the workers in this industry to ensure a high standard of care and a major reduction in abuse is achieved.

**We ask for your support in establishing a National regulatory body to oversee the registration of Personal Care Workers under the auspices of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia.**

Yours faithfully,

Wendy Simpkins

Beryl Buckby

Gwenda Williams

Margaret James