

Page 1 of 2

The Hon Bob Debus MP
PO Box 997
Katoomba NSW 2780

March 25 2010

Dear Minister Debus,

Re: Extreme shortage of nurses in a nursing home

Although I have written to you regarding this matter before there has been no improvement (possibly getting worse!) and I have grave concerns for my future health and well-being, current nursing home residents (aged or young) health and well-being and future nursing home residents health and well being.

The issue of concern is the appalling shortage of nurses in nursing homes (aged care facilities).

Generally speaking, nursing home residents do not have the mental or physical capacity to contact government ministers regarding this situation and I feel that it is my duty to speak out on their behalf as well as for myself.

I would like to make it very clear that I have **no complaints** about the nurses who work in or of the nursing home which I currently have respite in.

The nurses do their best in very demanding circumstances i.e. there are far too few nurses. They are forced to rush from task to task and resident to resident in order to get all their work done within their shift.

Because there are not enough nurses compared to the number of residents:

- it is not unusual to have to wait 30 minutes from when you first call a nurse (using your call bell) to when somebody attends you.
- getting dried thoroughly after a shower is a rarity. This leads to fungal infections.

Page 2 of 2

- Clothing is just pulled onto the resident in order to cover them so that they are decent - rarely adjusted to suit the residents comfort and aesthetic needs.
- Meals often go cold before a nurse is available to feed you - because they are busy having to feed other residents.

All of these examples are drawn from my experiences in several nursing homes (originally I was a resident for several weeks and now, just get respite) - including the current one

Similar stories have been told to me from many of my carers (past and present) who have worked in nursing homes (not the same nursing homes and in a variety of locations in and around Sydney).

Carers have also told me of the extreme over work they experienced when working in nursing homes.

I am truly grateful to be able to come home after a short period of respite. I get adequate care again and hot meals!

However, I am still very concerned about current residents who have to live constantly in substandard care.

I am very concerned about what will happen to me when I age (I am 42) and have to go into a nursing home permanently.

And I am concerned about future residents (myself included) - as the population ages surely the population in the nursing home will increase. What is going to happen if the nurse shortage in nursing homes is critical now!???

Please urge the government to address this situation **now**.

Yours sincerely,

Juliette Maxwell
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Sydney