

AINSLIE HOUSE ASSOCIATION INC

INCORPORATED
PATRON:
HIS EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE SIR GUY GREEN,
A.C.,K.B.E.
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA

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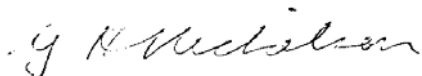
11th September, 1998

Nursing Home Subsidies Inquiry,
Productivity Commission,
PO Box 80
Belconnen, ACT. 2616

Dear Sir,

Enclosed is the submission to Productivity Commission from, the Ainslie House Association.

Yours sincerely,



Gweneth Nicholson
Director of Nursing

BACKGROUND

Ainslie House Association operates a 40 bed high care and a 22 bed low care unit in rural Tasmania, in a small town with a population of approximately 7,000 people. We are a not for profit organisation, run by a Board.

COSTS

Because of the location of the unit, rural and isolated in northern Tasmanian, the cost of food and services is higher than in the city. It is a coastal location therefore maintenance is also high.

REGULATIONS

We employ 2 registered nurses during the day in the high care unit, as this is the State regulation for us to operate as a Private Medical Establishment.

WAGES AND CONDITIONS

There is a possibility that there will be an increase in the salaries of the public sector nurses in Tasmania. This will impact on the availability of staff for the Aged Care industry. If wages increase there will be a need to cut down on the number of staff, as we will not be able to afford the wages. In the past the Commonwealth increased the amount of subsidies to take in the increase, so the ratio of staff to residents could be maintained, and service quality maintained. The Government may look at doing for the Aged Care Industry what it has done for the Maritime Union of Australia, to achieve this outcome.

QUALITY CARE

Quality staff will be lost to the public sector, if the wage rise does not flow on. Aged care is a speciality, and it is difficult to get quality staff in this area, especially if conditions do not match other sectors of the Health Industry. This is an ongoing problem in the rural areas. Aged care nursing is a speciality, as the health of the older adult and the impact of disease, illness and medication varies very much from the younger adult with the same condition. Nursing in an Aged Care facility is very different to a hospital setting.

Staff shortages are at the moment being accentuated by United Kingdom recruiting in Australia.

ACCREDITATION

The cost of accreditation will also take away money from the Care of the resident, and must affect the quality of care, especially in Homes where good quality care is now being given. Extra documentation needing to be done is taking staff away from the bedside and to spend more time on paper work. This is lowering the quality of care.

FEES

There should be flexibility in the amount of fees allowed to be charged by each facility and the money from income tested fees remain with the facility, not be deducted off our subsidy.

AWARD

Simplification of the award needs to be done. We believe that a negotiable Enterprise Agreement, should be in place. which would look at the award, It would be done on a national basis through the Peak bodies of the Industry. Annualised salaries, holidays, and sick leave, negotiated on a national basis. There are anomalies in these from state to state.

VIABILITY

Due to the position in rural Tasmania, it is not possible to have large Aged care Facilities, it is catering for the local population, but also taking in residents who enjoy sea air as opposed to the air pollution in the city in the especially in the winter.

PRESENT FUNDING.

It is not possible to reduce funding, to our state, at the present time we are full expending the subsidies and funds we receive. If funds are cut we must look at decreasing staff, as we have no other source of income.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult in small rural areas to attract staff, and because of facilities being small, for them to be viable. Therefore the government must look at providing the aged in every area with the same quality of care whether they live in North Queensland or rural Tasmania.