



## **Senator the Hon Santo Santoro Minister for Ageing**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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#### **Security and protection legislation for aged care**

Legislation introduced into the House of Representatives today will give new protection to aged care residents, including compulsory reporting of abuse, protections for those who report and improved arrangements for investigating complaints.

The key elements of the Aged Care Amendment (Security and Protection) Bill 2007 were announced by the Minister for Ageing, Senator Santo Santoro, last year. They will build on other measures recently introduced, including police checks for certain aged care staff and volunteers and increased spot checks by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency.

“I look forward to the new arrangements coming into effect as scheduled on April 1,” Senator Santoro said.

“I am sure that all of my parliamentary colleagues will welcome it as a major step forward in aged care. Residents and their families can rest assured that any concerns they have about standards of care will be investigated fairly and promptly.”

The new compulsory reporting arrangements establish a requirement for providers of residential aged care to report suspected sexual and serious physical assault of residents.

The report must be made without delay to both the police and to the Department of Health and Ageing.

Under the changes, providers will also be required to ensure that there are internal processes in place for the reporting, by staff, of all incidents of sexual or serious physical assault, that the identity of staff who report is protected and that staff are not unfairly treated as a result of making a report.

The Bill and supporting legislation give the Department of Health and Ageing greater capacity to investigate issues of concern and to require aged care operators to correct problems where they have failed to meet their responsibilities. A new Office of Aged Care Quality and Compliance within the department will be responsible for these matters.

The current Commissioner for Complaints is replaced with a new Aged Care Commissioner to provide an independent mechanism to hear complaints about how the department has responded to complaints, and about the conduct of the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency and its assessors.

The Aged Care Commissioner will also have the capacity to initiate its own reviews.

“I urge anyone who has concerns about the care being provided in an aged care service to continue to report these matters to the Department of Health and Ageing on free-call 1800 550 552,” Senator Santoro said.

“The standards of care in our aged care sector today are generally very high, but the legislation will make them even higher.

“Our frail aged care residents deserve the best possible care and this very thorough new system will ensure that no breach of their faith is tolerated.”

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