

Aged Care Sector Calls for Spot Audits and a Review of the Health and Disability (Safety) Act 2001

Recently, the public's confidence in the aged care sector has been shaken by the Belhaven rest home incident. The public's confidence has also been shaken by the 462 sentinel and serious events in DHB hospitals.

"While these events in aged residential care and public hospitals are isolated and do not reflect systemic problems, all of us need reassurance that everything is being done to maintain the high quality of care being delivered by certified health providers", said Martin Taylor, CEO of HealthCare Providers New Zealand.

In order to reassure the public, HealthCare Providers New Zealand's membership is calling for the following measures to be implemented by the Government:

- Unannounced audits for aged care providers and DHB hospitals
- A review by the Law Commission of the Health and Disability (Safety) Act 2001 to see if it has achieved its goals and is being applied consistently in the public and private sector
- The publishing of all certification audit reports.

"Spot audits support the improvement of quality care delivery without passing on unnecessary costs. This is very important for smaller and rural providers, as any increase of costs would simply hasten their closure – just the thing the government should be avoiding," Mr Taylor said.

"Earlier this year I approached members and asked whether they believed the current audit regime should be updated and resources put into spot audits instead of worthless duplicate DHB audits. This was well supported by members and I approached the Ministry to discuss our ideas. Unfortunately, they declined to meet on the topic, but following the sentinel event publicity and the publicity around aged care, we think the time is now right to implement this change.

"All legislation needs to be reviewed to see whether it has achieved its aims as agreed by Parliament. We believe the time is now right for the Law Commission to look at the Health and Disability (Safety) Act 2001. The outcome of this review will confirm what is being done well, what could be done better, and whether it is being applied consistently across the public and private sectors," Mr Taylor said.

"We believe publishing all certification audit reports will assist the public in their choice of health care provider and build confidence that faults are being identified and resolved. Transparency and up-to-date information are essential when making an informed choice."

“The implementation of these three measures would result in a high level of assurance by the public about the delivery of health care in New Zealand,” Mr Taylor said.

ENDS

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