

8 February 2018



Standing Committee on health, Aged Care and Sport
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Via: Health.Reps@aph.gov.au

Re: Inquiry into the Quality of Care in Residential Aged Care Facilities in Australia

To whom it may concern:

Volunteering Australia writes to the Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport on the *Inquiry into the Quality of Care in Residential Aged Care Facilities in Australia*.

Volunteering Australia made a submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee in August 2017 on the *Effectiveness of the Aged Care Quality Assessment and Accreditation Framework for protecting residents from abuse and poor practices, and ensuring proper clinical and medical care standards are maintained and practised*, where we made a number of recommendations in relation to volunteer engagement in residential aged care settings.

In the submission, Volunteering Australia outlined that volunteers make up a significant percentage of the aged care workforce, delivering ancillary support, frontline services and increasing social capital in aged care and residential settings.ⁱ

Volunteering Australia stresses the importance of having independent observers to respond to violence, abuse and neglect in residential settings. Volunteers, such as community visitors, can provide impartial observation on issues, which differs from paid employees, given they are engaged in their role “for the common good and without financial gain”. The Community Visitor schemes can provide a limited safeguard for people in some institutional and residential settings, although it is not available in every state and territory.ⁱⁱ

Specialist education and training for volunteers engaged in residential settings is also vital to negate abuse and exploitation, and to improve the quality of care. However, volunteers should receive adequate support from their provider for the training and education.

Training in aged care can be resource-intensive and must be specialised. This issue was identified in a 2011 Productivity Commission Report which highlighted that, “Funding for services which engage volunteers in service delivery should consider the costs associated with: volunteer administration and regulation; and appropriate training and support for volunteers.”ⁱⁱⁱ

A National Aged Care Alliance report on the *Aged Care Quality Framework* underscored that there should be the inclusion “of adequate training and ongoing support of volunteers to ensure the provision of quality services and protection for consumers.”^{iv}

Volunteering Australia emphasises that for the effective delivery of supports and services, education and training should be in line with the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement*. The advice provided by the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement* (the best-practice guide for volunteer participation), state that volunteers should be given information about how to make a complaint or raise a concern within an

organisation and to relevant external bodies. In addition, the standards advise that grievances from volunteers should be managed consistently, transparently, equitably and in line with the principles of natural justice.^v

There should be adequate mechanisms in place to support volunteers, to make complaints without fear of reprisals or inaction from within an organisation. There should also be processes in place where a complaint can be escalated if a circumstance arises where it may not be supported by the provider, or where a resident, carer, volunteer or family member is unable to speak up. Volunteering Australia also recommends that whistleblower provisions are extended to the volunteer workforce. All volunteers should feel supported and empowered to contact the Aged Care Complaints Commission.

Further details addressing the terms of reference can be found in Volunteering Australia's submission on the [*Effectiveness of the Aged Care Quality Assessment and Accreditation Framework for protecting residents from abuse and poor practices, and ensuring proper clinical and medical care standards are maintained and practised.*](#)

Volunteering Australia is the peak body for volunteering working to advance volunteering in the Australian community. Our mission is to lead, strengthen, promote and celebrate volunteering in Australia. We work collectively with the seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies to deliver national, state and local volunteering programs and initiatives in accordance with the Government's priorities.

Volunteering Australia is happy to provide further information on the matters raised above. To discuss this further please contact Ms Lavanya Kala, Policy Manager at Volunteering Australia at lavanya@volunteeringaustralia.org or (02) 6251 4060.

Yours sincerely



Ms Adrienne Picone
Chief Executive Officer
Volunteering Australia

ⁱ Volunteering Australia (2017), Effectiveness of the Aged Care Quality Assessment and Accreditation Framework for protecting residents from abuse and poor practices, and ensuring proper clinical and medical care standards are maintained and practised, https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/files_mf/1503278511SubmissionontheEffectivenessoftheAgedCareQualityAssessmentandaccreditationframework.pdf, p3.

ⁱⁱ Australian Cross Disability Alliance (August 2015), Submission to Inquiry into Violence, Abuse and Neglect against People with Disability in Institutional and Residential Settings, http://pwd.org.au/documents/Submissions/ACDA_Sub_Sen_Inquiry_Violence_Institutions.pdf, p66.

ⁱⁱⁱ Commonwealth of Australia (2013) 'Portfolio Budget Statements 2013-14: Budget Related Paper No. 1.14, Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio', https://www.dpmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/pbs_2013-14_Portfolio.doc, p25.

^{iv} National Aged Care Alliance (2017), NACA Response: Single Aged Care Quality Framework, April 2017, <http://www.naca.asn.au/Publications/NACA%20response%20Single%20Aged%20Care%20Quality%20Framework.pdf>, p6-7.

^v Volunteering Australia (2017), Effectiveness of the Aged Care Quality Assessment and Accreditation Framework for protecting residents from abuse and poor practices, and ensuring proper clinical and medical care standards are maintained and practised, https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/files_mf/1503278511SubmissionontheEffectivenessoftheAgedCareQualityAssessmentandaccreditationframework.pdf, p6.