



Margaret May MP

Shadow Minister for Ageing

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Ageing Industry Let Down by Minister Elliot

Older Australians cannot afford to have a Minister who isn't working in their best interests Shadow Minister for Ageing Margaret May said today.

Mrs May said: "The Rudd Government has been in office for more than four months now and during this time, I have been dismayed at its complete indifference to the welfare of older Australians.

"Australia is facing considerable challenges with its ageing population and the increasing pressures the aged care sector is under and the "performance" of the Minister for Ageing (the Hon Justine Elliot MP) has many in the industry worried about aged care's future.

"Rather than instilling confidence, the Minister's rhetoric and actions are creating anxiety and apprehension in the community.

"For example, the leaked report over the Easter holiday period on the operation of the Office of Aged Care Quality and Compliance has left the industry reeling.

"The media coverage of that report was scathing and newspapers carried headlines that screamed "aged care abuse triples", "battered image of aged care", "abuse in nursing homes soars".

"Anyone reading the headlines would have been appalled, particularly if you were a resident in an aged care facility or you had a family member residing in one.

"Rather than setting the record straight immediately, the Minister bought into the headlines - a glaring failure on her part.

"I call on the Minister to explain why was the report leaked to the media and why weeks after the leaking of the report, does the sector still not have a copy?

"Why is the report not on the Department's website?

"Why did the Minister not alert the Australian public (particularly in light of the sensationalist headlines) to the fact that there was a difference in reporting standards between current and previous reports.

"Previously providers were not compelled to report breaches, now providers are compelled to. Unless readers are alerted to this, it is impossible to make a meaningful comparison between the leaked report and the previous report.

"The 418 "sexual and physical assaults" reported were largely or possibly all reported by providers and comprised 278 serious physical assaults. These were almost exclusively resident on resident assaults.

“The most relevant statistic in the report is that only 113 Notices of Required Action were issued.

“If that important statistic was stressed by the Minister we would not have been confronted by sensationalist headlines.

“Breaches can be for such things as cold food and yet the Minister ignored the facts and made mileage out of an unqualified report.

“The industry and older Australians are being undermined by the very person whose job it is to work in their best interests.

“It’s apparent that many members of the government still haven’t come to terms with being in government as Minister Elliot’s actions demonstrate.

“Rather than supporting the industry, she is destabilising it.

“Since the headlines, she has sought to pacify the industry acknowledging that the majority of aged care providers provide top quality care.

“Nevertheless, there is no doubt that her handling of the portfolio is damaging the sector and also the employees who are already feeling undervalued.

“It’s obvious that older Australians don’t count under the Rudd Government’s watch.

“For a Minister to pull down an industry that is facing such daunting challenges doesn’t bode well for the future of older Australians”, Mrs May said.

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Media Contact: Krystyna Homik - 0408 739 273