

Submissions to the Carnell report must be made public

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The federal government released *The Review Of National Aged Care Quality Regulatory Processes* two weeks ago. Aged Care Matters and Aged Care Crisis call on the reviewers to make the submissions public.

“This review received 436 submissions”, says Dr Sarah Russell, a public health researcher and director of Aged Care Matters. “Why did the reviewers only refer to 51 submissions (11.6%) in the report? This is very unusual”.

It is also unusual to receive 159 submissions (36%) from staff, yet only quote from a few submissions. “One aged care worker was quoted 5 times – including using the same quote twice”, says Dr Russell.

“Despite my criticisms of the methodology, I was pleased the reviewers criticised the current lack of publicly available data and policy-relevant evidence”, says Dr Russell. “Without data, it is not possible to make a comprehensive assessments of the residential aged care system”.

“When choosing an aged care home, it is important to know the staff numbers and skill set”, says Dr Russell. “A good aged care home employs an adequate number of registered nurses. Numerous studies show that when registered nurses are on duty, residents have better health outcomes, a higher quality of life and fewer hospital admissions.”

“The aged care system requires much greater transparency”, says Lynda Salterelli, Aged Care Crisis. “Aged care homes should be required to publish their rosters. They should also be required to share clinical indicators such as falls, pressure injuries, dehydration, malnutrition and medication errors. Without this information, it is not possible to be an informed consumer”.

The reviewers describe the primary role of quality regulation as consumer protection. “Rather than tinker with the accreditation standards and outcomes, the Quality Agency should go back to the drawing board and start again”, says Dr Russell. “We need an accreditation system with measurable outcomes that genuinely protects residents from neglect, negligence and abuse”.

A 2005 Senate Inquiry concluded the accreditation standards and outcomes were too generalised to effectively measure care outcomes. “The government had an opportunity to improve the accreditation process but they did not accept the recommendations from this Inquiry”, says Lynda Saltarelli.

The Quality Agency has proposed introducing a Single Aged Care Quality Framework. "They are replacing 44 vague standards with 8 even vaguer standards," says Lynda Saltarelli. "We still don't have measurable outcomes".

In response to the review on regulatory processes, the federal government announced that accreditation would rely only on unannounced visits to aged care homes. This is not a new initiative. During the 2015-16 financial year, the Quality Agency undertook 2,866 unannounced visits.

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