



Rebekha Sharkie MP
Member for Mayo, South Australia
1/72 Gawler Street
Mt Barker, SA, 5251

12th December 2018

Dear Ms Sharkie,

I am writing on behalf of Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) and the broader allied health sector to ask you to consider an important, practical change to the Aged Care Amendment (Staffing Ratio Disclosure) Bill 2018 that you have sponsored. That change consists of an expanded categorisation of the different allied health professions under Section 9-3C(5) in order to support a meaningful report on their relative staffing levels.

AHPA is very supportive of the Aged Care Amendment Bill and the intention to increase the ability for older Australians and their families to make informed decisions about aged care. Our submission to the recent parliamentary inquiry detailed our support while also providing practical, constructive commentary to improve the effectiveness of the planned Bill. While we were pleased to see reference to our commentary in the report, we were disappointed that the recommendations did not integrate our suggestions. In particular we are concerned that the recommendation was that the reporting categories were only revisited in 12 months time.

It is our firm belief that grouping the diverse range of allied health professions into a single category will not improve the older Australians' ability to understand their level of access to services that they may require. Instead it may in fact have the opposite effect—it may lead consumers to believe that they will be able to access services that are not in fact available. An example of this might be a facility that has a speech pathologist and a dietitian on staff but no physiotherapist. In this case the consumer would have no access to rehabilitative, physical care.

We argue that the individual allied health professions are highly distinct, much more so than some of the other categories identified in the Bill. As such we strongly argue that this change to Section 9-3C(5) is very necessary. We note that this view was supported by the Australian Medical Association and the Australian College of Geriatric Medicine in their own submissions to the Inquiry.

I thank you for your support of older Australians and the allied health aged care workforce that provides vital services to them. I am confident that this Bill, with small changes, will provide a valuable increase in transparency and an improved ability for older people and their families to make informed decisions about residential aged care.



I thank you for your consideration and encourage you to get in touch with me if I can provide further information. I would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss in more detail how our request will help support consumers and better realise the intentions of this Bill.

Sincerely,

Claire Hewat
Chief Executive Officer

About Allied Health Professions Australia

Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) is a collegiate body consisting of 20 national allied health associations members and a further 6 organisational friends with close links to the allied health sector. AHPA's members collectively represent over 100,000 allied health professionals who work across the primary, acute and tertiary sectors in Australia.

AHPA believes that it is vital that allied health professionals have the opportunity to work alongside the medical and nursing communities to help shape and implement the aged care system of the future. Allied health professionals represent almost a third of the country's health care workforce and deliver over 200 million health services annually.

Allied health professions provide crucial support for people experiencing age related disability, chronic illness and a wide range of other health issues. Access to allied health services continues to be significantly lower for people in residential aged care than those living in the community leading to poorer health outcomes. By ensuring that allied health services are fully accessible across the country will we ensure that Australia has an integrated, comprehensive health care system which delivers world class health care.

Please visit www.ahpa.com.au for further information about our organisation and work.