

30 July 2009

Accreditation Review and Risk Analysis Section
Department of Health and Ageing
MDP 68
GPO Box 9848
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Email: accreditationreview@health.gov.au

**Re: Review of the residential aged care accreditation process
SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION.**

Subsequent to my previous submission I have learned that nearly half (5 of 12) of the accreditation agencies board is made up of members of the industry. It is totally unacceptable for the fox to be guarding the hen house. An oversight body should not be governed and controlled by those who are the subject of the oversight process.

This is not hypothetical. The review commissioned by the agency in 2005 expressed concern at the “interesting business relationships”

WestWood Spice acknowledges that the aged care sector generally has a number of interesting business relationships between government, service users, shareholders, stakeholders, charity and the Agency. These business relationships may be seen differently by different parties but some matters of ‘good business’ are relevant:

Examples include a director who is also the CEO of a home currently being investigated by the department over the death of a resident. (see <http://www.agedcareforums.com/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=107>)

The homes associated with all of the 5 industry directors are subject to the full range of accreditation and support visits. However far these directors distance themselves from the process, the assessors will inevitably be reluctant to find fault with their own executive. Even if there is no bias there is a perception of bias that should not be there.

We can envisage a situation where assessors working in a director’s company would fear for their own jobs when assessing the nursing homes owned by the mate of a director – or when the reverse situation existed. There is also the threat that the assessors company be taken over by the directors.

This confirms my assessment that the agency was set up as, and intended to be primarily a support group (and so a marketing resource) for the industry. Its mode of operation and patterns of behaviour are directed to this and not to its increasingly important role in oversight. It is consequently not well suited to the latter role and will not function well if it is simply split into two divisions. It has also been pointed out to me that the agency is exempt from FOI so is not publicly accountable. This created difficulties for the present government, in 2005 when it was in opposition. (see Hansard s8086.pdf – 17 Feb 2005 page 135). Having 5 directors from the industry makes the agency directly accountable to the industry.

I would therefore like to modify my submission by urging that the oversight role of the agency be taken over by DOHA and be closely associated with the Complaints Scheme. The accreditation agency can then become an industry support body whose veracity would be readily assessed and evaluated against the findings of an independent oversight body.

The oversight and complaints schemes would be reviewed at the annual meeting with community committees and community representatives that I suggested. Issues and performance would be discussed openly with those most concerned. This close association with the community would hopefully mitigate concerns about these processes falling under the control of a government whose political interests might be served by keeping a lid on unpalatable developments in the sector.

This would simplify the changes that I suggested in my submission. The community representatives and the community committee would be dealing with only one body and each representative would need only one supervisor. The suggested changes are otherwise unchanged.

Signed: _____

J Michael Wynne