

Hon Tony Ryall: Media Release

Comprehensive clinical assessments coming for rest homes

The Government has announced an \$11 million partnership with the country's rest homes to further improve rest home care.

Health Minister Tony Ryall said new technology will be rolled out across rest homes to support regular, uniform, comprehensive clinical assessments of all residents.

From the moment they first move into a rest home, every resident will be assessed across 22 key aspects of their health. And this comprehensive assessment will be repeated at least every six months.

Speaking at the Aged Care Conference in Auckland, Tony Ryall said, "The Government is taking further steps to improve aged residential care. This new comprehensive clinical assessment system will help nurses better identify and monitor the needs of individual patients.

"This system is used in Finland, Spain, France, Canada and the United States. It's based on proven international research and standards. Resident care is improved because of the detailed information collected in the assessments and the various actions that result from that" said Mr Ryall.

Over time, each rest home resident will be assessed on arrival at an aged care facility, using the nurse-led international evaluation system. And while nurses are constantly monitoring residents, there will be comprehensive assessments every six months or whenever there is a significant change in condition.

The system uses screening questions that focus on 22 key aspects of a resident's health such as nutrition, cognition, falls and skin condition. It also incorporates the resident's strengths, preferences and needs. This provides a structured way to build a comprehensive picture of the resident's health and well-being.

Trained nurse assessors in each rest home will identify potential risks sooner (eg, weight loss, incontinence, depression), and modify a resident's care plan accordingly.

Individual assessments can be aggregated to a rest home-level and aged care sector-level to identify larger trends. This perspective will allow the aged care sector and the public health service to take a more proactive approach to resident care.

The \$11 million public investment covers the international evaluation system produced by InterRAI, education and training and some hardware. Providers will contribute significant resources to freeing nurses for training and managing change to the new system. Because of the extensive training requirement, the programme will be rolled out in partnership with aged residential care facilities over the next three to four years. It is expected to be available to 90% of residents within three years.

The Government has made a number of policy changes to improve rest home quality and supervision: introduced spot auditing, publication of audit results on line, auditing the audit agencies, increased annual aged care subsidies by \$100 million,

boosted dementia bed subsidies by \$40 million over 4 years, and funded specialised training for 300 aged care nurses.