



**Health Care Providers NZ
Press Release
11 September, 2008**

Poor Aged Care Planning Means DHB Code Red Situations Will Get Worse

The present overcrowding and code red situations¹ developing in government hospitals will only get worse unless more beds are built by aged residential care providers.

“This situation clearly indicates aged residential care is a core health service. It’s a fact that the biggest users of DHBs hospitals are the elderly and DHBs rely on being able to discharge elderly residents into aged care facilities in order to free up beds for elective and emergency patients. If they cannot do this the system back ups and crashes”, said Martin Taylor CEO of Health Care Providers NZ.²

This unfortunate truth is well understood by DHB management. For example, Canterbury DHBs chief medical officer Nigel Millar recently said to his board, “*The health service as a whole relies heavily on a viable and responsive residential care sector for older people. Acute hospital care would very rapidly be compromised if it began to fail. The health and wellbeing of many older people is inextricably bound up with this service*”³.

“The warning sounded by Nigel Millar is confirmed by our research which shows the number of aged care beds need to increase from the present 34 – 36,000 to 41,000 by 2011⁴. An investment in bricks and mortar of between \$625,000,000 to \$875,000,000 needs to occur. An investment that is not being made”.

Mr Taylor said “our research clearly shows, sometime soon the elderly will not get the care they need when they need it, and DHB hospitals will be permanently at code red, which means the whole community will suffer”.

This situation underlines why it is so important for strategic planning to be undertaken in the aged care sector to establish future demand and supply targets to ensure the elderly get the care they need when and where they need it.

Unfortunately, no strategic planning work on aged care is currently underway at the Ministry of Health (see written parliamentary question 5639), which is why we have asked all political parties to make the following commitments:

¹ http://www.nzherald.co.nz/topic/story.cfm?c_id=204&objectid=10531020

² Health Care Providers NZ represents 80% of the aged residential care sector.

³ <http://www.cdhb.govt.nz/corpbrd/dhbmeetings/2008/8Aug08/Item%207-Board-Aug08-Residential%20Aged%20Care.pdf>

⁴ Based on medium population projections and the same percentage of over 65s using aged care as in 2004.

Will you protect the elderly's future access to care, i.e., will you support a repeat of the 2001 costing model to ensure the living standards of the elderly in care are protected and do you agree to establishing the number of beds needed in future to ensure the elderly can access aged care if they need it?

At present some political parties have made a specific commitment to deliver on this request and if a crisis is to be avoided the next government must deliver on the commitment in 2009. To see each parties reply go to www.whocares.org.nz

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