



New Zealand  
Aged Care Association

16 August 2013

Shane Ardern MP  
Chair  
Primary Production Select Committee  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

Re: Submission on Food Bill

Dear Mr Ardern

- 1 NZACA is a not-for-profit, national membership organisation which represents all parts of the aged residential care sector from the religious and welfare providers through to the nationwide commercial operators in New Zealand.
- 2 Our membership covers over 80% of beds in the aged residential care sector in New Zealand. Members provide the full spectrum of aged care services from rest home and retirement accommodation, to hospital, dementia and psycho-geriatric care.
- 3 In making this submission, while NZACA acknowledges that people in residential care facilities are likely to be a vulnerable population where food safety is concerned. However the absence of foodborne illness events in these residential care facilities is clear evidence that the systems currently in place already provide adequate food safety controls.

- 4 In fact it is NZACA's belief that most of the requirements for food safety are already being met by the sector as we are required to comply with the following regulations - *Health and Disability Services Safety Act, the Health and Disability Sector Standard (NZS 8134:2001), the Infection Control Standard (NZS 8142: 2001)* and Ministry of Health Certification processes.
  
- 5 Providers of aged residential care are currently required, by a range of regulatory requirements, to operate quality systems that include a number of elements which one would expect to find in any robust food control plan. These elements include:
  - Quality Policy
  - Governance
  - Quality and Risk Management Plan
  - Quality Improvement Plan
  - Document control and recording
  - Corrective Action Plan
  - Exception Reporting
  - Complaints management
  - Staff Training
  - Nutrition and Safe Food Management
  - Infection Control Management
  
6. Providers are also audited (the majority every 18 months) by an accredited third party (Designated Audit Agency). Audits are also commissioned by District Health Boards to check compliance with contracts for service provision. The Ministry of Health also conducts Issues-Based Audits of facilities if and when required.
  
7. Given the existing regulatory structure for our sector, it would be preferable to be able to achieve any improvements to food safety management within the existing structure and systems.
  
8. Our view would be different if there was any evidence at all that the current system was not working and that robust research had established a systemic

problem with food hygiene in the aged residential care sector. That evidence does not exist.

9. We also do not accept the argument that changes are required to prevent future problems arising. Our position is based on the reality that the current regulations governing food hygiene in the aged care sector have been in place for a decade with no problems arising what so ever.
10. In light of this any additional regulatory burden as a result of the Food Bill passing into law would be unnecessary and a poor use of already scare resources in the aged care sector.
11. It is also important to note that there is a close working relationship with District Health Boards on all aspects of quality and safety in aged care facilities. As such the sector would prefer not to have to deal with territorial authorities, because there is little direct involvement with them currently and the current single regulatory channel is the most effective.
12. In conclusion, NZACA supports the objectives of the Food Bill and agrees it is important to ensure safe food for all consumers especially when dealing with vulnerable sectors of the population.
13. However NZACA believes it is appropriate for the aged care sector to be exempt from any obligations under the Food Bill, and request this be considered by the committee in light of the existing regulatory arrangements which have worked very successfully for the last decade.

Martin Taylor

Chief Executive

New Zealand Aged Care Association (NZACA)

[martin@nzaca.org.nz](mailto:martin@nzaca.org.nz)