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Media Release

**Surprise $300,000 ambulance fee increase upsets aged care homes**

A surprise increase in emergency ambulance charges has come without any consultation and will place an additional burden of $300,000 annually on the residential aged care sector, says the New Zealand Aged Care Association.

Simon Wallace, Chief Executive of NZACA which represents around 600 care homes, or 90% of the residential aged care sector, says he is extremely disappointed that the Ministry of Health has given approval for St John’s Ambulance to increase medical emergency ambulance call out charges from $88 to $98.

“Our members have around 30,000 medical emergency ambulance call-outs per year, which means the $10 increase equates to a total additional bill of $300,000 annually.”

Mr Wallace says the increase has come out of the blue, despite NZACA being in regular discussions with the Ministry of Health and St Johns.

“It’s been imposed on top of a 40% increase in ambulance call out charges at the beginning of 2014, which means our care homes have been hit with a 50% increase in just over two years.

“Many NZACA members are small religious, welfare or not-for-profit care home operators. Because of their contractual agreement with the Ministry of Health, they can’t pass this additional charge on to residents, so will have to cut back in other areas.”

Because of the advanced age and frailty of many residents, ambulance is often the only way to transport them safely, says Mr Wallace.

“We have been in regular discussions with the Ministry of Health and St John to highlight the burden ambulance charges place on our members, particularly those in rural areas. We had recommended they cap the cost and limit the number of trips a care home must pay for a resident and introduce a rural supplement.

“This increase flies in the face of those discussions and given we are such an important user of St John’s services, the lack of consultation is extremely disappointing.”

He says NZACA is seeking an urgent meeting with the Ministry of Health and St John’s Ambulance to express member’s concerns around both the fee increase and the lack of engagement.

**For more information:**

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Key facts & figures

* NZACA is New Zealand’s largest aged residential care membership organisation, representing 90% of the sector.
* There are 670 aged residential care homes spread around New Zealand. The average aged care residential care home has 57 beds.
* 61% of homes are privately owned, 20% owned by a charitable/religious/welfare organisation and 19% are publicly listed.
* The number of people requiring residential care is steadily increasing and will continue to do so. The number of beds required for residential care will increase from the current 38,000 up to 52,000 by 2026.
* Every aged residential care home receives a subsidy for the elderly (65+) from the Government – wages account for approximately 60% of costs.
* There are 30,000 caregivers and 5,000 nurses working in aged residential care homes. District Health Boards manage eight additional facilities.