

Letter to the Department of Health and Aging

Ms Prue Karmel
Director
Capital and approved Provider
Department of Health and Aging (fax 02-6289 5004)
Aging and Aged Care
MDP 75 GPO Box 9848
Canberra ACT

4th October 2007

Dear Ms Karmel,

URGENT – re Approved Provider Assessments for nursing homes

I refer you to our correspondence over the years.

I now write to inquire as a matter of urgency **whether the changes to the aged care regulations promised me in correspondence** from the Minister for Health and Aging on 7th June and the Minister for Aging dated 19th June 2007 **have in fact been made and that companies buying other companies that already have approval status will now have to seek approval in their own right?**

My concern relates to press reports yesterday indicating that BUPA has purchased DCA's nursing home division. **Will BUPA have to seek Approved provider Status and be reviewed?**

BUPA has shown itself to be particularly commercially aggressive in its competitive marketplace disputes. It has not hesitated to put those for whom it has assumed responsibility to considerable stress and inconvenience – if not at risk in order to protect its own bottom line.

A good example of this propensity to behavior that threatens the sector was the aggressive dispute between BUPA and Healthscope in 2003. In that dispute not only sick citizens but the entire health system became the meat in the sandwich. In that instance the younger and politically active citizens were able to take the matter to the press, and pressure politicians and the parties to a resolution. For details see http://www.corpmedinfo.com/healthscope_bupa.html

The situation in nursing homes is very different. The frail and mentally compromised are not only unable to protect themselves in this aggressive environment but should not be expected to do so. In a similar situation not only would they be caused needless anxiety but they would not have the resources to act and the consequences for their care would be far greater.

If the intention of the approval process is to protect the vulnerable and frail elderly then I believe that it is essential that they carefully examine BUPA's commercial activities in the light of their possible adverse consequences. Corporate behavior is a cultural attribute and does not change when a company operates in different sectors.

The question is a simple one of fact and I look forward to an immediate response.

Yours sincerely,

Copies to Allison Rosevear
The Hon Dr Rob Such MHA
The Hon Jan McLucas – Shadow Minister for Aging

J Michael Wynne