

**For immediate release**

## **Elderly New Zealanders compromised by lack of quality home-based care**

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Wellington, New Zealand - July 13, 2011 - New Zealanders should be concerned at the lack of quality control in the in-home care industry, as the Auditor General highlighted in its report on home-based support services for older people, Elder Family Matters general manager Lawrie Stewart says.

“While home-based support services can be critical to the continued health and well-being of older people, the quality and adequacy of government-funded services is highly variable and often poorly managed,” says Mr Stewart.

Due to a lack of consistent data the Auditor General, in her report released on 12 July says “I am therefore unable to give positive assurance about the quality and consistency of services throughout the country”<sup>1</sup>.

Mr Stewart says: “With taxpayers spending \$232 million on home-based support services last year, the dearth of data means we have no idea if services meet the needs and expectations of our older community.”

Mr Stewart says the report failed to provide strong recommendations to improve the quality of home-support services.

“The most important ingredient for quality care is the support worker assigned to the older person. However it is in the Government’s interest to promote home-based support service as an unregulated industry that employs unskilled workers who complete unskilled jobs and are paid near the minimum wage.

“With a turnover of support workers of between 50 per cent and 80 per cent annually, few elderly people can confidently retain the services of a support worker who they get to know and trust.

“The report’s response to these concerns, suggesting DHB “work collaboratively with providers”<sup>2</sup> is weak and stronger leadership is required to improve the standard of the industry.”

Mr Stewart supports the report’s recommendation that an in-home care certification standard (New Zealand Standard (8158)) be made mandatory<sup>3</sup>.

“Unfortunately ACC’s contracts and Capital and Coast District Health Board’s current request for proposal for home-based support services seek to reduce the number of providers and does not require providers to obtain this standard.

“Without requiring this standard it is clear that both CCDHB and ACC are not committed to addressing the real issues of quality care.

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<sup>1</sup> Home-based support services for older people. Page 3, paragraph 5.

<sup>2</sup> Home-based support services for older people. Page 4, paragraph 4.

<sup>3</sup> Home-based support services for older people. Page 5, recommendation 3

“The one-size-fits-all model promoted by CCDHB is in contradiction to the Government’s pre-election promise where “users of aged-care services have a choice of providers who meet national standards of care<sup>4</sup>” through a “support-at-home payment” for home based services.

“If New Zealand, as a country, is unwilling to invest to help the elderly live independently as they wish in their own homes then we will continue our trend of institutionalising our elderly citizens in expensive residential facilities and as a result undervalue the contribution that our older citizens deserve.”

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<sup>4</sup> Choice not chance for older New Zealanders. National Party. Page 4, theme 1.