

08/27

Ms Lisa Fenn
A/g Committee Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Fenn

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) is pleased to make a submission to the Committee on the Aged Care Amendment (2008 Measures No.2) Bill 2008 (the Bill).

The AMA is concerned about the length of time it takes for older Australians to be assessed by an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) in some jurisdictions. The AMA supports the measures in the Bill to reduce the number of unnecessary reassessments for residential respite care and high level residential care. This is a first step to ensure older Australians have timely access to appropriate care.

The AMA believes the efficiency of the ACAT process can be further improved by including general practitioners (GPs) in the assessment process. General practitioners form long-term relationships with their patients and their families. An older person's usual GP can provide his/her background knowledge of the whole person and their circumstances to the assessment process. Our members tell us the ACAT process makes little use of the information GPs can provide about their patients. This information would ensure the person's assessment results in them receiving the most appropriate community and residential care.

In urgent circumstances where an ACAT assessment cannot be carried out quickly, GPs could provide an interim assessment. This would allow older people to access appropriate care immediately. The GP assessment could be confirmed by an ACAT at a later time.

The AMA would be pleased to discuss this matter further with the Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Ford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dr Peter Ford
Chair
AMA Committee for Health Ageing

5 November 2008
pf:sc