



Office of Hon Tony Ryall

Minister of Health
Minister of State Services

15 MAR 2010

11 MAR 2010

Ms Ann Martin and Ms Liz Baxendine
Chief Executive and President
Age Concern New Zealand
PO Box 10-688
WELLINGTON 6143

Ref. no. 010000350

Dear Ms Martin and Ms Baxendine

Thank you for your letter of 9 February 2010 about changes to home support services being carried out by a number of DHBs. I assure you the Government is committed to supporting older people to live independently in their own homes for as long as it is safe for them to do so.

Many DHBs are under financial pressure and, in the current economic environment, you will appreciate there is limited additional Government funding available. Ministry of Health officials advise that the changes to which you refer have been made as part of a broader programme by DHBs to re-evaluate their spending. However, I have been assured by all the DHBs involved that no-one will be unsafe or unable to stay in their own homes as a result of these changes. Any specific cases where there is evidence to the contrary should be brought to the attention of the DHB concerned.

Although some people have been reassessed and have had a reduction in home support services, a significant number have also had increases as a result of the process. Clients have a right to appeal a decision to alter home support provision. They (or their families) can also ask for reassessment of their support needs if they consider their level of service is not appropriate.

I am advised there are instances of people having been allocated home help following an acute hospital event or stay in hospital but who have continued to receive those services beyond the need for them. There are also instances of abuse of the system. For example, a woman who moved in with her daughter still owned her home, and she went there each Tuesday so a support worker could do her housework.

It is expected that DHBs will prioritise funding in a way that ensures services continue to be provided to people with the highest level of need. At the same time, DHBs are expected to further develop home support services including services that allow more complex care to be provided at home.

Yours sincerely

Hon Tony Ryall
Minister of Health

Please let me know of any cases concerning you.