MEDIA RELEASE

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IMPROVED NURSING HOME SPRINKLER STANDARDS

January 1, 2013 marks the start of landmark NSW Government reforms improving safety for elderly residents by requiring sprinklers in residential aged care facilities.

“Regulations supporting the sprinkler reforms have been finalised following public comment during November,” Planning and Infrastructure Minister Brad Hazzard said.

“From January 1, we will have a schedule in place ensuring NSW aged care facilities install sprinklers within the next three to four years. The NSW Government has consulted widely on these reforms, with broad agreement that the reforms are critical.

“The requirement to install sprinklers will improve safety for elderly residents and follows the tragic loss of life in the November 2011 Quakers Hill fire. Sprinklers minimise a fire’s intensity and give more time to respond or evacuate.

“The Government has made these important changes after wide consultation with aged care service providers,” Mr Hazzard said.

Changes include:

- Mandatory installation of sprinklers in all Commonwealth accredited aged care facilities.
- Making it easier for facilities to get ten-day approvals from accredited certifiers to install sprinklers, by allowing external water tanks or pumps to be located in areas currently set aside for parking and landscaping.
- Allowing people who purchase existing facilities up to a year to install sprinklers; and
- Reducing compliance costs by not requiring sprinklers in non-resident parts of buildings in specific circumstances.

“Facilities that haven’t installed sprinklers by April 2013 will need to inform their visitors and residents by displaying signs and placing information on their website,” Minister for Ageing Andrew Constance said.

“If aged care facilities can not install sprinklers by April 2013, they will have to lodge an implementation plan setting out clearly their schedule for installation.

“Aged care facilities able to install automatic sprinklers by September 2014 will not be required to lodge an implementation plan.

“Facilities unable to reach that goal must provide an implementation plan before September 2013 and have until March 2016 to install the sprinklers. In exceptional circumstances a one-year extension may be granted.
“This longer timeframe will provide a flexible outcome for facilities with limited resources including those in rural and regional areas,” Mr Constance said.

Those without sprinklers will have to submit six-monthly progress reports to a proposed implementation committee, with the reports posted publically. Information is available at www.planning.nsw.gov.au

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