

Submission into the Senate Inquiry

Aged Care (Living Longer Living Better) Bill 2013; Australian Aged Care Quality Agency Bill 2013; Australian Aged Care Quality Agency (Transitional Provisions) Bill 2013; Aged Care (Bond Security) Amendment Bill 2013; Aged Care (Bond Security) Levy Amendment Bill 2013

15th April 2013

“Never be afraid to raise your voice for honesty and truth and compassion against injustice and lying and greed. If people all over the world...would do this, it would change the earth.”

William Faulkner (1954)

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Advocare
incorporated

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Advocare is the leading Western Australian organisation in the promotion of older people's rights and the prevention of elder abuse. We are funded by both the Department of Health and Ageing (National Aged Care Advocacy Program – NACAP) and Western Australian Department of Health (HACC), and are responsible for:

- Promoting the rights of older people;
- Advocating on behalf of people receiving aged care services;
- Providing education to staff and clients of aged care services and;
- Assisting older people experiencing elder abuse – the abuse of older people by their family, friends and those in a position of trust.

Advocare is interested in the Senate inquiry into the Living Longer, Living Better Bill as we, as an independent advocacy agency, are the **ONLY** independent body in Western Australia that is directly involved in assisting with aged care complaints and addressing poor service quality. It is for this reason that we submit our recommendation that:

- 1) NACAP agencies be better funded to accommodate the current and increasing workload, and assist older people in receipt of federally funded aged care services and;
- 2) NACAP agencies to be consulted about the Bills, any upcoming amendments and the implementation of the changes.

Our recommendations are informed by the fact that:

- Independent advocacy is a necessary part of the aged care industry and advocacy agencies have a unique insight into the issues faced by aged care service providers and recipients alike;
- Demand for advocacy services are increasing steadily and agencies are too under-resourced to accommodate the increases, and;
- Funding for NACAP services is disproportionate to the service that is being provided, and increased funding would increase our ability to continue to act as the only independent agency in the aged care complaints process.

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ROLE OF INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY

Advocacy derives from the Latin word *Advocare*. Advocacy means 'to be called to stand beside' (Oxford Dictionary, 2013). Independent and professional advocacy is utilised to protect the rights and promote the interest of the most vulnerable, and marginalised people in our communities.

Advocacy is vital for all aged care consumers as they are all experiencing some level of frailty and dependence, and rely on their service providers for basic human needs. Clients access Advocare's advocacy services because:

- Advocare is independent, and clients have the option to remain anonymous;
- The clients are fearful of retribution from the service providers and aged care staff;
- Professional advocacy reduces the client's dependence on their family and friends to liaise with providers;
- They are assured that their complaints are valid and that they do have the right to advocate for better quality service.

When things go wrong in aged care, clients and their families call a NACAP agency

IMPORTANCE OF AGED CARE ADVOCACY

As people age they lose their independence, freedom, choice and often the confidence to demand better. Advocacy is a service that is employed by the most marginalised and vulnerable people in the world to assist them to negotiate for better service and ultimately, a better quality of life.

The aged care recipients that Advocare assists under the NACAP program are primarily high care residents, with health complications, disability and co-morbid family issues. Advocacy provides these clients with support to speak out, a voice for when they cannot speak and results in their life changing for the better.

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NACAP agencies are the only agencies in Australia providing advocacy for our vulnerable aged care recipients. Advocare is Western Australia's only NACAP agency, and is therefore responsible for assisting all older people in the state. NACAP clients report an overall improvement in their quality of life after using our service, and are most impressed with the level of professionalism and successful outcomes our advocates negotiate for them, allowing them to enjoy their later years and be assured that their rights are protected.

DEMAND FOR AGED CARE ADVOCACY IN WA

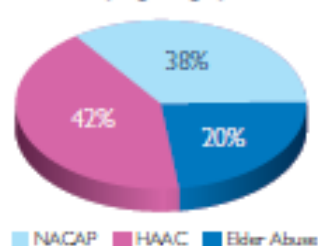
In the 2011-2012 Advocare provided 5,950 hours of advocacy and information to older people in Western Australia, 2,274 hours of which were to federally funded aged care recipients under the NACAP program. This 5,950 hours were nearly double the hours recorded for the 2010-2011 financial year, indicated an increasing demand for aged care advocacy across all levels of service provision.

38% of Advocare's total advocacy and information provision in 2011-2012 was for the NACAP program, despite NACAP disproportionately providing less than 30% of our total funding (see graph below, from Advocare's 2011-2012 Annual Report).

Advocacy & Information by program in 2011-2012

Program	Cases	Hours	Average Hours
NACAP	766	2,274	2.9
HACC	1,117	2,481	2.2
Elder Abuse	463	1,204	2.6
Total	2,346	5,959	

Advocacy and Information Hours by program graph



Internal discussions between Advocare's staff, management and board have attributed the increasing demand for aged care advocacy to:

- The current socio-economic climate and rising cost of living, affecting older people's ability to remain independent at home;
- The increase in life expectancy, and high proportion of older people in Western Australia;

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- Advocare's effective marketing and promotion of older people's rights and the advocacy and support available to Western Australian residents, and;
- The federal government's increased focus on aged care service improvement, encouraging older people to expect better quality service.

The increasing demand is set to rise due to the increasing cost of living, limited resources of NACAP agencies, pressure on aged care services and Australia's ageing population.

FUNDING FOR AGED CARE ADVOCACY

Advocare currently receives over 70% of their funding from the Western Australian State Government to provide advocacy, information and education to Home and Community Care recipients, and older people at risk of, or experiencing elder abuse. The remaining 30% is received through the NACAP program to provide advocacy, education and information to all recipients of federally funded community care packages, and all residents of Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF) in Western Australia.

The funding is due to be increased by 20% in 2013, a welcomed increase, but still not sufficient enough to accommodate the number of older people in need of our help. With the projected increase in demand for advocacy services through the NACAP program, further review will need to be undertaken into the need for advocacy services, and the government's commitment to fund such essential services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INCREASED FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Advocare recommends an increase to the funding for NACAP agencies whose services are currently overwhelmed with NACAP clients, as the current level of funding cannot support sustainable service. Government policy will increase NACAP funding by 20% as of 1st July 2013. This will not adequately fund the services that NACAP agencies are currently providing, let alone provide for increased, or better quality service provision.

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CONSULTATION WITH AGENCIES

Advocare recommends the incorporation of essential NACAP agencies in consultations about the Bills, decisions on how the changes are implemented and any reviews of the proposed Acts. As the agency that consumers turn to when everything goes wrong, we can offer valuable insight into not only the inner workings of the aged care system, but the best interest and wishes of the consumer; which is something that is key in all policy and legislation.

REFERENCES

Advocare's 2011-2012 Annual Report (2012) accessed at www.advocare.org.au on 15th April 2013

Faulkner, W in Van O'Connor, W (1954) *The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner*, North Central Publishing Company

Oxford Dictionary Online (2013) *Advocacy*, accessed at www.oxforddictionaries.com on 15th April 2013, 7:20pm