

Aged Care Legislation Amendment (Financial Transparency) 2020

It is my wish to make a Submission to the above Senate Inquiry.

As an aged pensioner, 85 years of age, fortunate to be in good health and own my own home, I am interested and involved in my community.

My background was growing up in a rural area on a farm in southern Queensland. When in my twenties I became a wife and mother, raising a family with my husband and being involved in school and sporting activities with other families. I became widowed and remarried, then again widowed. I have been engaged in retail business, sugar milling activity, secretarial work, and owned our own small business with my deceased husband.

Participating in voluntary community efforts has been a significant part of my life, and I am active in joining with acquaintances and friends in small community groups.

I have become increasingly disturbed by the current situation of staffing at facilities which are run by Aged Care Residential Providers.

My knowledge about this situation comes from personal contact with acquaintances who are in care, and with committed caring and compassionate staff of Aged Care homes, who have resigned as a result of the pressure of increased demands on their work schedules. I could describe instances which I have experienced and witnessed myself while visiting acquaintances in care, but personal anecdotes are not part of my submission.

My attendance at the regional visit to Mackay by the Queensland Parliament Panel into the Euthanasia Bill caused me to become much more concerned about the whole Aged Care situation. At that presentation, it was startlingly obvious to me that a sizeable number of the elderly people present (many of whom I know personally) were very afraid of the treatment they could receive if they became residents of Aged Care facilities. They saw euthanasia as a preferable alternative to inadequate care and even neglect, should they need to be admitted to a full-time care agency.

Some of the anecdotal evidence presented at that meeting was truly horrific. This experience has led me to believe that Euthanasia and Aged Care need to be

considered in conjunction and not as separate areas to be dealt with by Inquiries and Legislation.

The lack of trust in the community about the management of Aged Residential Care facilities is a major concern of mine.

One of my concerns pertaining to this Inquiry is my awareness of the slashing of numbers of qualified nursing staff, both RN and EN, personal care attendants and allied health staff, by Aged Residential Care Providers. Although numbers of care staff are being slashed, the amount of work and care required for patients remains the same. This obviously leads to a significant, unacceptable reduction in the quality and level of care provided for each client. These actions by ARC Providers are certainly not person-centered.

Although it is an important step that our Federal Government has taken in appointing the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, it is lamentable that the Senate Inquiry into transparency (Financial) for ARC Providers was voted down. Our Government has not exhibited adequate awareness about the urgency of this situation.

Prompt and appropriate action by our legislators, including severe penalties for failures by ARC Providers to comply with delivering required information is essential.

The actions taken by our Governments to help our elderly and infirm citizens to remain in their own homes are proving to be successful measures to avoid or lessen the need for care in institutions, but when full-time care is unavoidable, we need to ensure that quality care is provided.

My concerns include the need for transparency in accounting for the total income received by ARC Providers, and the sources of that income as well as total expenditures.

The overtaking of not-for-profit community owned and operated Aged Care facilities by big corporations is a cause of grave concern for all Australians. Care for our frail aged and/or infirm members should not be relegated to companies whose primary aim is profit. Those communities who demonstrate initiative in caring for their own people need the assistance of local and State and Federal Government in the accounting work deemed necessary to fulfil their obligations.

The recent survey commissioned by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, conducted by National Seniors, clearly demonstrates that the majority of Australians believe that older people add value to their societies by their work, experience and knowledge. Part of the Document states “Almost all agreed that society has an obligation to look after older people and care for them”. There was an overall acknowledgement that our Governments have serious responsibilities in providing for our older and/or disabled people and ensuring that they receive quality person-centered care.

Thankyou for the opportunity to make a submission to this Inquiry.

Margaret Airoidi,