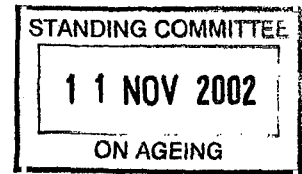


Submission No. 48

Submitted on 6th November, 2002 by...

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INQUIRY INTO ISSUES SURROUNDING THE ANTICIPATED AGEING OF THE AUSTRALIAN POPULATION.

DR. ANDREW SOUTHCOTT - COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN.

I wish to make a Submission to the Committee on Anticipated Ageing of the Australian Population.

HEALTH CARE

There are large lists of names at nearly all Nursing Homes in Townsville **and I presume this is the case elsewhere in Australia.** There usually has to be a crisis to get a person placed quickly eg broken hip, which means hospital, then if unable to mobilise self, they need to stay in hospital, taking up a bed, or the Hospital concerned has ACAT find a placement even if it means in Ingham or Charters Towers, to free up the hospital bed (This is locally in Townsville, of course)

WANDERING DEMENTIA

This is the person who is not adequately provided for in the Aged Care picture. Nursing Homes are constantly in the media. There should be a real concern for these people and their families.

As I work in a Dementia Unit in Townsville, I know from a professional, and personal experience, that this area of Aged Care is seriously under-funded and there are simply not enough placements for Wandering Dementia sufferers. This problem must become worse over the next 20 – 30 years as the baby-boomers enter the dementia prone years.

There are many families going through the despair of trying to cope with a loved one who suffers from this affliction.

The Wandering Dementia are not acceptable to Nursing Homes or Hospitals as they can get out, do unpredictable things, and there are not enough staff to monitor their actions. Families are lucky if they can manage 1 –2 weeks Respite through ACAT, often in a facility not really suitable for their wandering, unpredictable ways.

I know from personal experience that through urgency, my father could have been placed in Eventide, Charters Towers, except that he was becoming unpredictably verbally violent and, **unfortunately, wandering. The position could not be taken up due to the wandering.** There were no Nursing Home or Dementia Unit vacancies available in Townsville. During this time, my mother was being destroyed mentally and physically, and nobody, including ACAT could do anything about it. If my father went to hospital, he got sent home due to the wandering throughout the ward, the staff could not keep up with him.

For the future, the issue of Dementia in the Ageing Population will need to be seriously dealt with a great amount of compassion, and money will need to be made available by the Federal Govt to deal with it.

The Baby Boomers are coming through and not only are we dealing with Alzheimer type dementias, multi infarct type dementias, etc but there will be the **drug related dementias**. Many of the Vietnam Veterans and their families, with their related problems will be presenting themselves to the Aged Care System.

The present Aged Care system is not coping now. There will need to be a massive change of priorities by the Government and its Aged Care Administrators, focusing with very open and honest eyes and minds on the real needs of Holistic Care for the Aged, to make a difference for the future.

QUALITY OF CARE BY NURSING AND MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS:

Another point I wish to make is that as a Care Worker in Dementia, it is very important that with the Accreditation System for Aged Care Homes, that the **quality of staff** is taken very seriously, especially for staff working in a **Special Care Unit/Wandering Dementia Specific Unit**.

A Personal Care Assistant or Assistant in Nursing position needs to be seen as a worthwhile career, not a off-the-street job that anyone can do. They must be prepared to undertake compulsory Dementia Training, if they do not understand Dementia and the many strategies required to maintain the resident's dignity.

Could I suggest that Doctors receive more training in understanding dementia sufferers as through my professional work, my colleagues and I see Doctors who are not in tune with their aged patients and also Doctors who are reluctant to take on Aged residents in facilities.

SUMMARY :

1. Home Care Providers are very beneficial to Aged people in their own homes **for a certain length of time.**
2. Families can care for their Aged loved ones **for a certain length of time.**
3. There are a percentage of these Aged who will need either a Nursing Home or a Dementia Unit **and there are not enough facilities or 'beds' to cope.**

Because of my experiences both professionally and personally, I personally feel the Government will need to seriously address this small but very important area of Aged Care.

This area is the 'end of life experience' for these people and these dementia sufferers must not be overlooked. Providing 'homes away from home' is a problem now. It will get worse. Educating Doctors, Nurses and Carers to a high standard will in turn give Quality Care in the Australian Aged Care System. The Government needs to provide suitable facilities (or 'beds' as it is called).

I apologise that this Submission is not very professionally done. This is not my 'forte'.