

Dorothy Impey Home

A tapestry of caring

November 28, 2008

SENATE ENQUIRY INTO AGED CARE

As an independent not-for-profit, community-based aged care facility operating in the north-west area of metropolitan Melbourne, we are finding demand is strong and finances tight. We are about to move to a new 90-bed facility (with a cost of \$200,000 a bed). From that experience we would like to make the following points . . .

- The federal government did not contribute any capital money. We had to find/fund \$18 million all by ourselves. Although we have applied in the past for capital funding, unless we are almost exclusively ethnic, aboriginal or rural/remote we don't stand a chance with limited funding Australia-wide.
- A very dangerous inequity exists between low care and high care funding. We have only been able to obtain bank finance for the new building because we can commit accommodation bonds as "collateral". As a result, we only have 15 high care beds. The demand upon us for high care far outstrips availability. No doubt this clogs up the hospital system at a higher cost, but successive governments seem afraid to tackle this issue.
- We would welcome a reduction in "red tape". All the regulations we have had to follow just for building has been horrendous, time-consuming and expensive. We still have to do a risk audit on aged care hazards brought about by adherence to building regulations, e.g. smoke doors that residents can't budge. Although a 9C classification has helped, a practical and fast-tracked system for aged care would be welcomed – if you want more facilities for baby-boomers.

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- There has been talk of interest free loans. That would be extremely useful. Just make sure there is less restriction and a bigger money pool. It should go to charitable/community people with a good track record rather than new (and private) providers.
- The regulation burden continues in daily administration of aged care. We get the impression that the politician's answer to embarrassing media scrutiny is to create legislation to protect their backside. We don't deny many regulations are justified, needed and a good idea. This includes accreditation. It makes us more professional. However, streamlining the 44 outcomes (e.g. eliminating the duplication of 1.1; 2.1; 3.1; 4.1 etc.) would be a start.
- The increasing use of IT and computerization would assist in managing paperwork. The government gave a grant a few years ago (\$1000 per resident) for spending on innovation. This was a good kickstart. However, some standardization, technical support and flexible aged care/IT programs would assist smaller organisations. The government has been sponsoring IT roadshows and things like ACFI and accreditation can now be submitted electronically. More co-ordination and publicity for things like this would greatly assist the changing of the average aged care culture towards technology.
- Please get more realistic about funding to balance the costs we are incurring – often arising from government regulations. ACFI as a system is a start, but there is no flexibility or alternate system to balance the budget, hire more trained staff, and provide a higher quality of life because we are focusing on costs not care.
- When getting applications from prospective new residents for our larger facility, we have had a number of married couples who can be at different care levels, yet want to remain together. Whilst we can initially accommodate them, there is a lack of flexibility in ACFI to financially support us – and them -- in this area long-term.
- An overwhelming demand comes from people who are concessional in both high and low care areas. We are having to say sorry once our quota is reached because of the need to repay the bank mortgage that built our facility to the standard required by both the government, the community, ourselves and also meet the cost of complying with complex building regulations.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a personal submission. It may not be logical or meet parliamentary standards. That's because we are carers not accountants. But it is from the heart – and that is what Australia needs for it's growing aged care industry.