

22 May 2003

Mr Luke Hartsuyker M.P.  
Member for Coffs Harbour.

Dear *Lu ke,*

Thank you for the invitation to the recent conference on the ageing problem. Although the participants were able to express their views quite fully, I feel I must reiterate a few points that could have been lost in the flow of ideas.

Although I have fingers in both the 'retirement village' and 'home care' camp I was quite distressed to observe the imbalance in favour of the village concept at the conference. Unfortunately this reflects the inbuilt problem that exists in the Canberra and Sydney based bureaucracies. 'They' have no idea of the problems that aged people have in the smaller, and not so small, country towns. No public transport, turnover of doctors, uncoordinated health care – one could go on forever. We have an improving access to community transport based in Coffs; it's marvellous but rumour has it that Canberra is going to improve it by somehow centralising it! That's the first problem – a sympathetic but unworldly bureaucracy; and please don't tell me I'm wrong as I deal with public servants every week who can't, for instance, understand why I can't get a particular specialist medical opinion within thirty days. Coffs doesn't have a specialist who could give that opinion so it's off to Sydney or the Gold Coast.

The second problem is that someone who organised the invites doesn't realise the huge imbalance mentioned above. I know one can do wondrous things with figures but at best ten percent of the aged die after been in some form of care. In other words ninety percent die in their own home or, more importantly, in the care of a relative or friend. Yet very little help is given to assist a husband to care for a sick wife and vice versa. I get cases regularly where a visiting nurse can't understand why a 40kg wife can't help a 100kg husband – "All you need do is this...." Really some are just not with it!

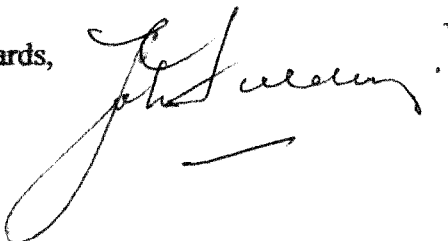
I'm sure you took onboard the very strong dissatisfaction all had with the absurd federal and state laws regarding such a diverse range of subjects – health and hygiene, privacy, security, litigation, etc. As I pointed out the application of these stupid laws could 'turn over' many not-for-profit organizations and you will be left to pick up the pieces.

Most present agreed with my contention on how a person can change for the better when they have access to free medical services. I see time and time again how a war veteran and especially a war widow improve their whole lifestyle when granted a Gold Card. I believe that the grant of a Gold Card actually saves the Commonwealth money notwithstanding the few who abuse the system. To apply the Gold Card to the whole populace would be too costly but perhaps it could be applied, without means testing, to all over, say, eighty. I stress 'without means testing', as the current unfair and virtually immoral attitude of Federal Governments to hit 'self funded retirees' (I'm one) is getting a bit beyond the pail.

For some time I have been trying to collect *practical* information on help for war vets and widows in Woolgoolga. Attached is the result, which shows the number of organizations out there ready to help. There are even more but one cannot put out such a list longer than one page nor with normal print. As you can see there is a need for some form of centralisation – not from Canberra but locally. By centralisation I don't mean another bureaucrat to produce something like the attached but the reduction in the number of providers.

Again thanks for the invitation,

Regards,



WELFARE CONTACTS in WOOLGOOLGA.

Woolgoolga RSL Sub Branch

Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT). Responsible for the assessment of care to be given to all people over the age of 60 or those with an age related disability. ACAT is responsible, among other things, for entry to hostel/ nursing home. Ph no 66567688.

Commonwealth Care Link Centre. Keeps database for all community services in this area. Ph no 1800 052222.

DVA Home Nursing. Is responsible for supplying nursing care to veterans. Must be accessed through a medical provider (doctor, ACAT etc). Ph no 66567645.

Mid North Coast Community Care Options. Provides 'care packages' through ACAT. Also will provide direct relief for dementia carers. Ph no 66514343

Carer Resource Centre. A Sydney based Commonwealth funded organization providing advice on problems associated with both the carer and the patient. Ph no 1800 242636.

Mid North Coast Carer Respite Centre. A Commonwealth funded body which provides help and advice to carers. Importantly can help with the provision of short term respite care. Ph no 1800 059059.

Community Transport. Provides both regular(bus) and individual transport(car) to veterans and the general community. Will take Gold Card holders to medical appointments without charge. Ph no 66511137

Home modification. May be able to help with modifications at a reasonable price. Ph no 66528725.

Day Care. The Seagull Centre situated within the Woolgoolga Retirement Village and cares for the elderly on Wednesdays and Fridays. Ph no 66540022.

Coffs Hbr Legacy. Responsible for the care of War Widows. Ph no 66527583.

Woolgoolga RSL Sub Branch. Responsible for the welfare of defence service veterans. Ph no 66561848/66492465.

Red Cross Telecross. Will ring every morning to check on a person's well-being. Ph no 66513363 (between 8 and 9am).

St Francis Xavier Home Help. Provides company for a house bound person for a few hours while the partner goes to the doctor, goes shopping etc Ph no 66 561608

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