

The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs References Committee
Suite S1 59
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Inquiry into Aged Care

I am writing to you to urge you to invite me to give evidence at the upcoming public hearings into Australia's Aged Care arrangements. I represent my mother, a young person currently residing in an Aged Care Facility in Canberra.

I believe that I would be able to provide important evidence to the Inquiry concerning my family's personal experiences of the inappropriateness of placing young persons and persons inflicted with injuries into the Aged Care System. Additionally, I would be able to provide substantial evidence of the inadequate and ineffective nature of the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency. This evidence would include details the recent sexual assault by my mother by a carer in an aged care facility and both the facility's and the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency's response to the management of this issue.

Importantly, the aged care facility took no action to address or report the sexual assault and my mother was unable to get help until she was able to inform her family of the incident. After reporting this incident to the police, I also lodged a report and sought assistance from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing who informed the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency about the incident as the carer involved remained working in the facility. Neither the Department of Health, nor the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency were able to appropriately manage this situation and I was astounded at the lack of procedures or authority to provide assistance to my mother or even to provide her with any degree of safety during the investigation. I have continued to seek information about the lack of government authority to ensure the safety of people in these facilities, however, my attempts have so far been unsuccessful.

The impact this incident has had on my mother is significant. Marilyn has been put into a situation where she was sexually assaulted by a person in a position of trust. Her complaints were disregarded by trained staff and she had to continually face the perpetrator for some time until I could get her to

a place of safety. In addition to the assault I have found it extremely difficult to access any counselling or support services to address my mother's emotional trauma. I remain concerned about other residents who remain in this home and their exposure to the risk of abuse. I think it is imperative that the government have the power to protect vulnerable persons from harm. Accreditation does not appear to provide any safeguards for the well-being of these people.

Apart from the sexual assault, I can provide substantial evidence regarding the inappropriateness of placing people like my mother in the Aged Care environment. My mother has, to date, resided in a number of different aged care facilities and the same issues relating to the inability of these facilities to manage or care for persons other than aged individuals consistently arise.

I am currently involved with a group of families who represent young persons suffering from acquired brain injury. Each of these families face the dilemma of placing their loved ones in an aged care facility, knowing that this is not an appropriate setting for their care. As a group, we would welcome the opportunity to provide information to the Inquiry on the impact of these issues on families and the individuals involved.

I look forward to hearing from the Senate Community Affairs References Committee in relation to my submission and request to appear before the committee.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Gladman
18 January 2005