



8 December 2017

Mr Trent Zimmerman MP
Committee Chair
The Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

RE: Greysafe submission - Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport Inquiry into the Quality of Care in Residential Aged Care Facilities in Australia.

We welcome the opportunity to provide a submission into the committee's inquiry into the quality of care in residential aged care facilities.

Greysafe is a not for profit organisation that works to prevent the abuse, neglect and exploitation of older Australians. Greysafe aims to prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation of older Australians by:

- Raising awareness of the issues through high impact campaigns and advocacy
- Developing initiatives to help end the social isolation of older Australians
- Empowering and supporting victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation by acting as an advocate and voice for the victims.
- Providing a range of programs and services to assist older Australians to feel safe and valued.

VISION

Our vision is for Australia to lead the world in the protection and empowerment of its older citizens, no matter their health or social status.

MISSION

- to investigate, expose and raise awareness of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation of older Australians.
- to educate the community of the need to take action to prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation of older Australians.
- to act of behalf of older Australians at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation through strong representation to Government

Focus of this submission in relation to the Terms of Reference

Greysafe sees its role as doing more than just highlighting the problems and issues. We aim to put forward ideas and initiatives to help protect and empower older Australians. We take seriously our role as a trusted advocate for older Australians that have experienced, or are at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

For this submission, we have focussed our attention on point two of the Terms of Reference:

The effectiveness of the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency, the Aged Care Complaints Commission, and the Charter of Care Recipients' Rights and Responsibilities in ensuring adequate consumer protection in residential aged care;

Replace the failing aged care random inspection scheme

For some time now there have been numerous reports in the media about previously accredited Aged Care facilities subsequently being found to have failed to meet acceptable standards of care.

Despite recent changes in relation to the residential aged care accreditation process announced by the Federal Minister for Aged Care, we believe they don't go far enough in relation to improving transparency in the system.

We propose a plan that our organisation believes would go some way to will go some way towards rebuilding community trust in the system.

The plan – that would see retired medical professionals and community advocates undertake random inspections of aged care facilities – is becoming increasingly urgent in the wake of a new emerging battle between bureaucrats and the aged care industry over who will pay for random inspections to check that residents are receiving adequate care.

The power struggle between the aged care industry and the Australian Aged Care Quality Agency (AACQA) is extraordinary at a time when reportable assaults in aged care facilities have increased over the past three years and in the wake of disturbing media reports of abuse in aged care and horrific examples of poor care and standards in accredited aged care facilities.

Not only are we hearing of new reports of accredited facilities subsequently been found to be substandard, but reportable assaults in aged care facilities have increased for the past three years.

You will be well aware, the last publicly available report released by the Federal Government in 2015/16, showed that nearly 3,000 aged care residents were victims of reportable assaults. These figures are distressing enough but clearly, if the media are uncovering poor standards of care at facilities that have been previously ticked off and accredited by AACQA, then the accreditation and random inspection process is broken.

Some in the community and many staff that work in the system have lost confidence in residential aged care. Yet the aged care peak bodies and the regulator's response is to start a slanging match over who should pay for a random inspection that would cost a facility between \$2,000 and \$5,000 once a year, if it took place at all.

Under the new model being proposed by Greysafe:

- AACQA would retain control and implementation of the 'tick the box' aged care accreditation scheme but random inspections would no longer be part of AACQA's charter.
- The number of random inspections would increase. The Federal Government would set a minimum quota for the number of inspections needing to take place across all parts of Australia.
- The Federal Government would call for expressions of interest from retired doctors, nurses, social workers and trained professional advocates to form locally based teams of 'Grey

Guardians' who would undertake more regular random inspections to both assess and report on the care and condition of aged care residents and the facilities themselves.

- The Grey Guardians would report into an independent office separate from the AACQA.
- Guardians would be locally based in and around their communities, be retired or semi retired and not currently employed as an aged care assessor with AACQA.
- Guardians would be paid a small stipend to cover costs and would be available to conduct inspections, if required, out of office hours and on weekends. (At present, random inspections by AACQA assessors generally take place between the hours of nine to five, Monday to Friday.)
- Interviews with residents, their families and nursing staff would become the first priority for random inspection visits. At present, under the AACQA managed system, discussions with families and residents forms the smallest percentage of an aged care accreditation assessment.

To support the implementation of the Grey Guardian scheme and improve transparency in the aged care accreditation and inspection process, we believe there should be a number of other changes implemented that will go some way towards rebuilding community trust in the system. They include:

- Each quarter, the government would take out advertising space in major newspapers and publish a report card, for the previous three months, of the number of assaults in aged care and the details of aged care facilities that have failed to meet 100% compliance with accreditation and random inspection checks.
- In the newspaper report card, publish the numbers of random inspections conducted during the quarter, including the names of the facilities inspected and the findings.

We believe this new plan is a win-win for the government and age care residents and their families. There would be an immediate and significant increase in the number of random inspections taking place at aged care facilities across Australia staffed by retired professionals with the expertise and availability to be on site more often. Most importantly, by publicly reporting inspection findings quarterly in the national media and seeing immediately where improvements have been made, or need to be rectified, Australians might start regaining confidence in their residential aged care system.

Yours sincerely

Michael Riley
CEO