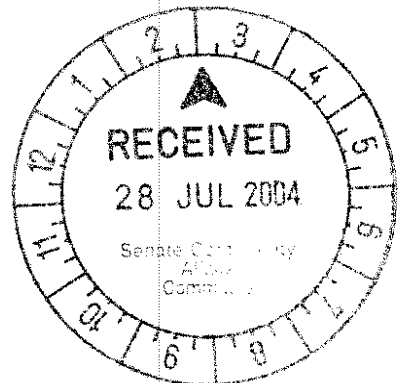


Carol Cullen,

26-7-04

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



INQUIRY INTO AGED CARE

Re: TERMS OF REFERENCE

(c) the appropriateness of young with disabilities being accommodated in residential aged care facilities and the extent to which residents with special needs, such as dementia, mental illness or specific conditions are met under current funding arrangements.

I have recently become aware of the plight facing young people who have suffered a disability and have little choice but be admitted to an aged care facility rather than be given the right to choose where they wish to spend their life.

I believe that Aged care facilities focus is on the physical care (bathing, toileting etc.), and Aged Care facilities are not obliged to develop any type of Individual Service Plan. I have grave concern that residential aged care facilities are not obliged to respond to the changing needs of younger people with disability, either via monitoring and reassessment or development of an Individual Service Plan as required of disability services.

Furthermore, in a residential aged care facility environment the focus is clearly on maintenance, prevention and slowing of further deterioration. This is clearly different from the dominant focus in disability service provision, which is on identifying and developing people's ability and potential, and re-assessing and adapting this over time. Such a system of maintenance for many younger people with disability may result in a decrease of skills and abilities.

People with disability have a right to live as valued individuals receiving support to:

- live in safety and security, free from neglect, abuse and harm;
- experience opportunities for positive growth and development;
- be contributing members of their community.

These rights are stated in international conventions on the rights of people with disability

In addition, deaths are a reality in residential aged care facilities. However, while death may be expected for older people who are in end stages of life, death ought not to be a frequent event in the environment of a younger person with disability. The placement of younger people in aged care facilities where death is an accepted and expected occurrence may contribute to the false perception that they are in end stages of life 'awaiting death' and this may influence the care received.

Therefore I request

- a policy of no new admissions into residential aged care facilities for younger people with disability.
- development of an action plan for moving all younger people with disability currently living in residential aged care facilities into community living, giving priority to the youngest.
- development of pathways for people with disability which exclude residential aged care facilities as an option.
- urgent resolution of the State and Commonwealth Government dispute about who is responsible and of the cross-government issues.

Yours sincerely,
Carol Cullen