

13 November 2008

Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Re: Aged Care Amendment (2008 Measures No. 2) Bill 2008

The Secretary

This submission is attempt to contribute to the Aged Care Amendment ((2008 Measures No. 2) Bill 2008. In making this submission I pay my respects to the thousands of Carers and especially to the many respondents of the Friends of EACH Campaign to raise awareness of the plight of Carers and the need to recognize that there is a need for alternate models of care possible.

In a sector that has become professionalized and dominated by a culture of corporate acts and behavior there is little opportunity for the community grass roots sector to contribute. All too often family caregivers feel excluded and individuals themselves who require the care are seen as an 'element' in the 'sausage factory of care provision'. Standardization guidelines and regulations do not of themselves crate community. Community is an organic element that exists if we

encourage people to come together without fear or retribution to talk about and contribute to the best ways that those who are our most vulnerable can be assisted and supported in their twilight years.

It is open to debate whether the Consumer representatives on Ministerial advisory committees are actually the voice of the ordinary people who are at the coal face and very much impacted by decisions made by systems and professionals at arms length from the care situation.

It is recognized that we have the mechanisms and the funding to operate a world class aged care sector that provides care and choices to individuals requiring care and their care providers. Importantly we as a community must also recognize the proper role and place of primary caregivers who are in most cases family members.

It is our contention that the corporate road is not best suited for the aged care sector. The intrusion of the 'for profit' sector has excluded real community input. It is our contention that cottage industry if this refers to community responses at a micro level is the best alternative. Welfare and support of people is a humanitarian cause. Corporate solutions in the aged care do not provide the best outcomes. What happens for instance to those who are of high care. Corporate entities are not likely to invest in these areas. Those that do will place a premium on profit margins. Quality of care will not be high priority.

As a community we are creating a situation where dependency is the order of the day. We now rely on and depend on the provision of supports. Self Help or individualized solutions are not considered. We

place our vulnerable people in the care of 'rented strangers'. We do this in most cases because the hours of direct support are minimal. The irony is that funding is not always the issue. The issue is the manner in which these funding streams are applied.

As a community we have not encouraged a family response or a community response in the care of our elderly citizens. This is despite the fact that more than 90% of recipients (of funding packages under the governments program of funded support to encourage people to remain at home) are cared for by a family member or a carer.

The Aged Care Act (The ACT) in its current form is neither consumer nor family friendly. Unless you are a recognized provider you do not have standing to propose or to offer ideas with respect to how supports can be arranged to meet the individual's needs of a person being cared for.

The Act allows for a range of funding models but does not allow for choice in the mode of delivery and utilization of funds targeted for the support of individuals requiring care.

In this instance I would like to make reference to the definition of Approved Provider.

The Act will need to distinguish between

- a. providers who provide institutional care and
- b. those providers who are the holders of funds for the purpose of supporting our elderly citizens to 'remain in their own homes' for

as long as possible. Invariably these providers are not for profit agencies. These agencies then outsource support provision for the individual.

The current definition is too restrictive in that it does not allow for providers to innovate or be creative in the offering of supports especially in the category b. referred to above. Providers in category b. are too risk averse but more alarmingly they are not willing to offer options to people because of their fears with regards the responses from the decision makers, the bureaucracy.

Additionally the current definition does not allow for a category of funds holders who can provide choice and alternate models of support. There has been much talk about 'consumer direction' of recent times in the area of disability and recently this has been referred to in publications issued by Alzheimer's Australia and ACSA.

Proposition to amend the meaning of the term 'Approved Provider'

It is our contention that the term 'Approved Provider' be amended so as to recognize holders of CAPS, EACH and EACH Dementia packages can be individuals or agencies who can act as a 'Financial Intermediary or 'Host'.

The Financial intermediary will act as the intermediary or 'go-between' the funder and the recipient of Care. This model removes the unnecessary duplication of management costs and administration costs which 'eat into' the fund.

The financial intermediary will act as a facilitator to design the program of care and support family caregivers and individuals in determining who will be employed and will act as the funds administrator and provide all of the administrative support to the fund recipient,

This category of Provider will open the range of options to recipients of these funds. The recipients of the funds will be able to determine who will hold their funds and they can choose the range of service supports.

The addition of an additional category of 'approved Provider' will facilitate the development of the Consumer Directed model. It is also our contention that individuals should they chose to be the holders of the funds and 'self manage' these should be able to have a choice.

The benefits of the redefinition of the term 'Approved provider' will mean that we encourage family caregivers and individuals to be the drivers of their programs and hence their lives. This change in itself shifts the power and the responsibility towards the individuals and their caregivers. The shift also means that individuals and their caregivers will be in a position to design their own programs of care, will be in a position to select the support workers they desire to provide care for their vulnerable person.

More importantly however the level of waste and duplication is removed so that the existing funding package can be better utilized.

As a community we cannot continue to invest in infrastructure and grow the bureaucracy to administer institutional care. We need to shift the focus back onto community to get better outcomes. I do not believe that

we get value for our \$40 billion dollars if we restrict options and the meaning of approved provider in the current legislation.

The Friends of EACH campaign has had a massive response from individuals and family caregivers who would like to self manage a consumer directed model of care but are 'sidelined, ignored' or 'not listened to' in despite the Minister's statement's that individuals and family caregivers can 'negotiate with providers' the arrangements that is put in place for the care of their elderly parent.

In the instance where the consumer model of care was operating in Melbourne the effectiveness of the utilization of the dollar was increased whilst the funding package was in the control of the family providing the primary care for their elderly member. More significantly however the quality for the support and the outcomes was increased for the person being cared for and the family caregivers.

I would be more than happy to expand and provide further details should the committee request these.

Yours sincerely

George Vassiliou

References:

The Senior Magazine: march2008 April 2008 June 2008 and July 2008

Radio Nation 'In the national Interest 8 August 2008

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