

I am writing as principle carer for my elderly mother. The submission focuses on the experience of searching for low-level accommodation respite care.

### **Issue One: Respite care provision**

As referred to in the Productivity Commission Issues Paper (pg. 15), one of the themes is “to encourage diverse, flexible, efficient services that facilitate independence and choice.”

My experience is that services are offering very little or no choice. More specifically, two providers that previously had offered excellent respite care now have permanent “No Vacancy” signs. The reason is simple: all beds are dedicated to permanent residents.

It is easy to rationalize the organizations strategy: In order to maximize their revenues, they discriminate in favour of “permanents”. (Also, having these arrangements would involve less staff administration). A second facility utilized also had no subsequent respite care vacancies.

Turning to solutions and using a 40-50 bed facility as an example: the government should allocate permanently at least **two** beds for respite care patients. This clause should be included in the Regulations that accompany the relevant Act. (Whether this needs to be done at a federal or state level, it is not clear)

It is obvious that the aged care industry would not support this measure (as they would get less revenue). However, respite care patients and their families deserve some equality in accessing facilities.

In the mix here is a further point: there is no “advocate” for respite care. Where inquiries were made, all federal and state agencies showed no interest in taking further action. And liaising with the Head Office for one of the major care providers brought no satisfactory resolution to the issue.

### **Issue two: payment for respite care stays**

The matter of payment for respite care stays should be mentioned. The correct procedure is for the service providers to invoice Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) direct. In two out of three situations, the invoice was sent direct to myself. Government agencies should be more proactive with compliance in this area.