

Clare Jones Coordinator, Mangrove Mt Community Group  
for aged issues

Today I am representing not only members of my own community; but also the almost three thousand people from across Australia who signed a petition I carried to Canberra some years ago. Also the many unable to put in a submission because they don't

~~Staying in ones community is important to many older Australians~~ not just our indigenous people. It is no medical secret that removing older persons from their community frequently causes them to go ga ga. And if against their will even more so.

~~Staying in ones own home can have many problems~~, especially in rural or outer urban areas. Loneliness, malnutrition, depression, limited access to care. They are vulnerable to scammers, and violence, as recent history has demonstrated. Bullying either actual or perceived is a major issue. ~~WHY is there no alternative in the community for the short time they could remain independent and mutually supportive of each other?~~

What is needed is community land, which can never be sold, set aside to be used by the community to provide for all older members, each community would be expected to take responsibility for determining priorities, but the outcome must cater for everyone in that community who's needs dictate they would be better in a more integrated system.

Many of the hospitals built in rural areas were built by way of community effort and would be ideal sites for a community aged care center.

~~Maintenance of independence and dignity is equally as important~~, so cottage hostels with residents allowed to contribute towards day to day workload and decisions; composite cottage homes etc would allow older persons to remain happily independent in the community at much less burden on the taxpayer.

Many older people worked in the public service for very low wages, to help make this country what it is today, they were assured that they would be compensated as money was being set aside to take care of them in their old age. Some remained in cheap rental housing, others sacrificed and managed to purchase modest homes, for many this meant that children and grandchildren also worked alongside the parents especially in rural areas in order to keep the farm and lift the family out of the poverty trap.

By making these homes subject to the assets test one would frequently be stealing from the younger generation their rightful recompense for labor, putting good experienced farmers off the land, and condemning several generations back into the poverty trap. What incentive would be left for others to try to get out??

~~When older persons are forced to leave their community the effect is far greater than just the loss of one person.~~ The partner is frequently put under considerable stress, unable to visit often, if at all. Children and grandchildren likewise. Friends and peers become apprehensive lest the same fate befall them. Not to mention the brain drain on the community.

It may be considered financially cheaper to condemn older persons to huge geriatric zoos outside their community where they may continue to exist beyond the time they would have lived in the community. I doubt that many of them would consider the trade off to be worth it. Certainly many communities are far the poorer for it, Not only in the financial loss of funds that would help to keep them stronger, but the brain drain, learning

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tolerance and consideration, Having a granny or grandpa with the time to listen, and impart knowledge of a past era. The valuable experience and knowledge that only age can bestow.

One has to wonder why when the emphasis for the past 30 odd years has been to keep mentally ill, intellectually handicapped and disabled persons in the community; have persons over 55 been encouraged to leave the community to enter a commune of only older people. Their resources are often rapidly used up on corporate fees and a fruitless search for acceptance or fulfillment. They can't return to their community, so end up lonely forgotten people just ripe for the elder abuse that so often happens, sometimes becoming difficult embittered individuals who are drugged to keep them in a cooperative existence.

If voluntary work could "earn brownie points" towards later aged care needs in the community, maybe the older people could continue to have a productive life in their community. After all you don't need to be able to walk to listen to a child read etc.

Our community came up with the idea of a composite home, there would be a central community room with facility to make a cuppa talk watch TV etc and a toilet, a common laundry. Off this would be several wide corridors into which older people from the community could lock an independent living unit [eg mobile home, caravan], which could be removed by family if so desired when no longer needed. There were several "units" that could be made available for those unable to provide their own. This would overcome most of the problems without putting undue financial pressure on individuals. It would give far greater protection to our oldies. We would however need the land to set it up, community land that couldn't subsequently be sold. It is felt that one in each village center would be ideal eventually; initially one at central mangrove with enough land to establish a small cottage convalescent, respite care permanent care "hostel" with paid carer and community volunteer assistance, where people either temporarily or permanently unable to remain independent could be cared for.

A bi-annual "competition" to determine the best maintained facility would ensure community pride and involvement, There are 7 village centers in our community.

Our community feel that they don't want to set something up where people from other areas are made to come because we had a vacancy, it was generally felt this would be tantamount to premeditated cruelty as we would not like it to happen to us!!

The attitude that because the family home is registered in the name of the older people therefore the younger have no right to expect to inherit is false in many cases especially smaller towns and rural communities. It is not uncommon for the entire family to contribute both money and effort in order to keep the family home.

When a family endeavour to improve their lot and rise above poverty everyone HAS to make sacrifices & pull their weight.  
Holidays don't happen. Secondhand shops are the first choice. often scrounging at tip or roadside helps.  
In drought the more able take whatever work they can to add to family coffers the older people know & understand this.

Many older people will stay in the home in an effort to ensure the younger ones get what they [the oldies] consider is rightfully theirs, or to ensure they have a chance to stay out of the poverty trap.

There seems to be no conscience about allowing already extremely rich C.E.Os of public companies taking obscene remuneration at the expense of the superannuate. There appears to be no mention of the fact that the majority of people get no voice on this matter, or that they would have a far better retirement fund if this were not allowed.

That Superannuation is invested in these companies cannot be denied, That many were set up at the taxpayers expense is also true; so why is there no push to protect that asset rather than take equity out of the family home of the poorer people in the land. If a family is expected to live on the minimum wage SURELY others could survive on ten times that amount. The difference could be invested to provide real care for the elderly in their own community where the cash flow would benefit everyone. After all we have paid twice for them in tax then the purchase of shares!!

It seems to me that the rich want to get their hands on more in a plan to inflict on the rest something they don't really want and which will leave the following generations worse off both financially and humanely. The message that coin takes precedence over care, and show over integrity appears all too evident.

To conclude; Slavery was profitable forced child labour certainly is, so why do we condemn them? IS not the intention to make profit from another vulnerable section of the community by big business equally immoral? Why not give communities the government money to help them to care for their own? Greed and care are mutually exclusive don't you think? Which is more important that people stay alive as long as possible or that they are able to LIVE as happily as possible for as long as they can.

You mention a review of the accreditation system, Try giving that process over to local retirees; who have a vested interest [they are likely to end up there] and let them do totally unannounced checks and maybe the elder abuse will diminish.

*Sponsoring of hands free walkers would help many to stay independent longer*

Obtained from the internet.

From a retired and respected member of the courts.

*Dear Julia*

Lets put the seniors in jail and the criminals in a nursing home. This way the seniors would have access to showers, hobbies and walks. They'd receive unlimited free prescriptions dental and medical treatment, wheelchairs etc AND they'd receive money instead of paying it out. They would have constant video monitoring, so they could be helped instantly if they fell or needed assistance day or night. Dependant family kept at taxpayers expense.

Bedding would be washed twice a week, and all clothing ironed and returned to them. A guard would check on them every twenty minutes and bring hot meals to their room.

They could have family visits and conjugal rights in a private suite built for that purpose, access to a library, fitness gym, spiritual counseling, pool and education.

Simple clothing, shoes, slippers, pyjamas and legal aid would be free on request. Private secure rooms for all with an exercise yard outdoors with gardens. Each senior could have a p.c, t.v. radio and daily phone calls.

There would be a board of directors to hear complaints, and the guards would have a code of conduct that would be strictly adhered to.

The criminals would get cold meals, midnight showers maybe twice a week, be left alone and unsupervised, lights off at 8pm, live in a tiny shared room and pay a minimum \$900 monthly, and have no hope of ever getting out. With the constant knowledge that if they ran out of cash their home would be acquisitioned and family tossed out many would choose to make the obvious early exit saving the government millions of dollars!! *If they become uncooperative They'd be drugged into submission.*

Justice for all?? !!

*Could there be bi lateral agreement*

T.A.

*Although this is submitted as a satirical comment, it says a lot about peoples perceptions of government priorities. The couple who asked me to pass it on to you are in late 60s to mid 70s age range with multiple health problems. They spend alot of time helping even older people to maintain independance.*