

Productivity Commission Draft Report

Caring for Older Australians

To Whom it may concern

I borrowed a copy of this document from a friend last week. I read it all. The realised the closing date for comment was past. I must thank Stuart for responding professionally to my phone inquiry and assuring me I still have time to submit my comments.

I am a 69 year old lady. I am a highly qualified teacher who spend some years for a change working and visiting aged care facilities. I believe I have the biggest number of elderly relatives in Australia. John Small was great-great-grandfather and Jane Evans my great grandmother. My Celtic ancestry enabled me to experience caring for our elderly all my life (its our responsibility and their right). My years working with aboriginal people has given me the understanding that they also have the celtic way of thinking, re aged care.

Firstly, some of my experiences re aged care:

1. Many older people (most) live in FEAR that the authorities will force them into care facilities. Hence they don't visit doctors if possible. The fear is made worse in that, families frequently see 'put them in a home ' as an easy guilt free way out. The desire to sell the oldies' home and access the loot is very often a driving force.' The relentless 'guilt trip' put on relatives to 'put them in care' is very strong these days. The trend to stop oldies driving is remove independence is another FEAR threat.

The mighty dollar no compassion and 'what's best for you' rules in aged care. What is the resultant psychological impact doesn't even rank a thought.

2. In the country, especially, the farm is very often business run and relied on by many generations of a family. The suggestion to sell a home to finance care is horrible and creates more fear than already exists in point one..
3. Some of the aged care scenarios I have personally experienced and the emotional fallout include:
 - a. Our family moved in with an elderly lady with no family so she didn't have to go to a home after hospital. Result she lost her fear after time. She became a weller and stronger. She wanted to sit in a chair while we were at work. She became interested in peeling the vegetables, doing mending etc.

She laughed again and lived a number of happy (in her words useful years) more than predicted. We became better, less selfish and humbler people.

- b. Mum often brought old people home and cared for them because their family didn't have time etc. We kids resented the time mum spent at times. However, we learnt a lot about life by talking to the oldies. We learned respect for seniors and those less fortunate. The guests all went to sleep happy each night and one day didn't wake up but, were happy till then.
- c. Family members took elderly relatives in 'for life'. Got all power signed over to them. Sold the person's home then put them in care and retired on the spoils. There was NO reverse of the sign over in bureaucratic rules.
- d. Many times I have helped oldies dumped in care to get hope, grow stronger and escape back to home to enjoy 10 or 20 years in their humble castle. Sometimes they need some help like meals, shopping, help to bath, maintenance or wood cut on a regular basis or after an illness. The aged pension is ample backed up by volunteer or funded help. The big issue is the oldie has help and so the emotional strength to soldier on as they want.
- e. A lot of older people are told their home is old, not modern enough etc and retirement villages are better. They sell out, go there and there is no going back!! They quickly die emotionally then physically way before their time in dreadful loneliness. Far from friends and family, community or a useful existence. Too late they realise that microwaves, automatic gadgets, DVD, carpet etc are too complicated and don't bring real comfort and happiness. Their community is poorer from loss of their jam making, knitting, skills, volunteer hours time to talk, share experience and support other oldies!!
- f. The old man cohered to go to a hostel 'because he can't manage a house alone'. His home if he has one is sold, 'better without the burden'!! He quickly becomes depressed, lonely, useless, gives up and dies. At times have seen such cases dig their heels in and return home before its too late. At times rent part of the place or share. They always stay healthy, alert, useful and live a lot longer!!
- g. My adventure as a cook/domestic in nice aged care facility. HORRIBLE. Bet it nursing home/hostel supervised retirement facility. The prime focus to make money. After all they invested to make a profit!!

The prime medication morphine or sedatives to keep the oldies management. The 'caring' family visits mostly disappear, the victims decline emotionally then physically as they lose hep, become useless, resentful and give up.

I saw many people arrive with the same conditions as people in assisted home situations. They all died, much sooner in terrible sad lonely controlled circumstances compared to the home examples.

As a worker in these places there isn't the compassion etc as in home/community situations. You get in the habit of taking short cuts eg leave it be taken to the toilet by the next shift. Don't take time for a chat or a quick joke or game of cards. The boss pays for basic feed, clean and make a dollar only.

When going to help Sue, your neighbour in the community, you make extra time for those special moments to provide the psychological nourishment so essential. Bonus doing something for someone and the joy of seeing the benefits.

I believe there should be no aged 'care' places for profit. Its not natural. If they are sick there needs to be hospitals or rehab/convalescent spaces, the end plan to go HOME where they belong. Remove that terrible FEAR, give them the hope and respect they deserve. If home needs help with washing, meals, shopping etc provide it.

Family and community need to be encouraged to volunteer help and support professional effort. End result, happier healthier oldies, less financial burden. More caring younger generation. No more the present mindset that our golden oldies are a burden or the governments responsibility!!

By all means let big business build state of the art retirement villages so people can sell out and buy one. NEVER under pressure or out of FEAR. Make sure they are available in every community (not just on cheap land) and that there is a try before you buy or sell factor.

A portion of public saving by not continuing the current 'what's best for you' mindset could be invested in basic cottage hospitals in each community. Set the communities again help raise funds volunteer in them and take at least partial ownership. Many of the now terrified oldies would gladly give time, cash and skills. This all reduces the fear and the dreaded 'aging population burden'.

By the way, I note with concern most contributors for the Draft document were from 'the industry', those there to make a profit, what happened user driven policy?

The list of associated agencies is far to many and a waste of money. More genuine care and support and far less regulation please.

There is a great need for communities and families (tax payers) to be supported to take back responsibility for our seniors peace of mind and health.

My dad died of fractured hip/chest infection as a result of a fall in a registered aged 'care' hostel during the night. The place with 86 residents was locked at 5pm and

unlocked at 8am when the staff arrived for the day. He was at South Coast his family on Central Coast. No choice.

What a happier life for us all had we had a local option or support for home care?
Surely community 'grapevine' is the best most economic regulator possible

No one can peel spuds, change spark plugs provide hugs or community spirit like a 90 year old safe in their own community.

Yours hopefully

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