

Marden S A 5070
2nd January 2011

Inquiry into Caring for Older Australians
The Productivity Commission
G P O Box 1428
Canberra City A C T 2601

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing this letter to you as a private citizen who was once working the health industry as a country G P. I developed an interest in the problem of caring for the aged as at the time I started the elderly were kept in the local hospital. Later I was involved in the establishment and building of an aged care facility.

In a country town there is some merit in these facilities as most of the people know of each or know each other. With the widening of admissions this has brought a number of problems the most pressing of these is when a couple need urgent assisted housing and they are sent miles apart from each other.

I have tried to write this letter several times and thought that the best thing was to offer my thoughts.

Most people in old age have lived a fairly free life in making decisions. When the need to go into aged care arises there is generally a precipitating factor such as a major health change either of a physical or mental nature, the loss of a partner particularly if they are dependent on that partner. Loss of mobility or even a number of falls with a broken limb creating a temporary, pressing disability. All the decisions in a number of these are forced by the time and need factor. The person suddenly finds themselves in hospital with a nursing home/aged care facility as the immediate result. This means making decisions about their present accommodation and the length of time that they will be unable to care for themselves.

What I am really saying is that most of us think about the problem and its threat to our mobility and freedom. Living by yourself at any age requires considerable mobility or use of available public transport. Also the help of friends and relatives is always in the background but is not guaranteed. Quite a lot of people who care for themselves do a lot of things at considerable inconvenience and without help. Most of them defer help because in most cases it is of an all or nothing at all basis and the elderly can not rely on what is being done or going to happen. Quite often decisions are made that lead to depression and death. To those of us who are younger and more self supporting this appears to be a way out. Most of these older people have lived their lives as we are but now need help. In some cases this will be better in a supporting care facility but my own feeling is that there should be more supporting help in their own environment and the accent should be on help not regulations. I recently had an event that needed support from the outside which was provided at no heavy cost by a very nice lady. She did the work well and

we were well satisfied. We did have to work around her available times to keep appointments but she was good. However when she was employed through a government scheme I was give a list of things that she could not or did not have to do. I may say that she did not completely follow the rules. There was no comment or comment from the lady herself. We had to be home while she was there. She was not to do any heavy lifting not move any furniture. It meant that the work that took me less than a day was now taking me longer than a day and I was now taking longer to move the furniture out and then back again that before one had the help. Before I only had to move them while now I had to move them out of the house and back again. It does leave one with the obvious choice of going into an aged care facility.

What I am saying is that a lot of thought has to be given to providing assistance at home rather than collecting all the old people and the disabled out of the way and only teaching them to forget freedom and making their own decisions. I am sure that a lot of people in Aged Care Facilities are sick of doing nothing but look at pre decided Television programs. Even on ordinary long weekends at Christmas there are enough repeats. Let us try to look after the aged instead of locking them in what are very effective prisons.

I must admit with the present attitude they are for more effective in keeping people out of the way rather than a life. I note in the paper today that they are saying that 1 in six people in England will reach the age of 100. Would we incarcerate all of these people? I have found that most people who live to 100 years do so because they are well and active and also have good and empathetic support.

Let us try and keep all old people out of assisted care in a Home and see if they can live a life at home.

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Yours sincerely

(K A G Evans)