

Submission in response to Draft Report, *Caring for Older Australians*, Productivity Commission of NSW, January 2011.

I am son and carer for my elderly mother (aged 91). The specific area of interest is in reforms to respite services. The closest reference in the document is on pg. 102.

“Carers of older Australians and consumer advocates indicate that they have difficulty in accessing appropriate and timely services”

The report does not progress the subject any further, which is considerably disappointing. Here are some of my experiences:

*Initially, there was excellent respite care service immediately available. The main reason was that the facility was new and they had spare capacity. However, over time all spare beds were eventually filled by persons wanting permanent accommodation. Covering the last three years, all attempts to secure a respite bed have failed. The general view now is that it is a waste of my time to apply for a bed.

*A second facility, newly opened, initially indicated that they would have respite available for the dates requested. Just ring back closer to the time they indicated. However, their policy changed when that time arrived: no provision any longer for respite. Despite pleading my case, there was no flexibility here. The most frustrating aspect was that the facility was new and they had an abundance of spare beds available.

*Even where there is a respite bed available, carers suffer unnecessary stress, both personal and financial, because they are unable to make an advanced booking. The current facility we are able to access for respite, while it has excellent facilities, would preference “permanents” if they applied (and “leave us in the lurch”.) Even if we had applied ahead of the “permanent”, this could still happen.

To resolve some of the issues referenced above, the Federal government should implement at least two reforms Australia-wide:

- (1) Depending on the size of the facility, for 100 bed facilities, provision for two dedicated respite care beds all year round. For 50 bed facility bed facilities, 1-2 dedicated respite care beds all year round.**
- (2) The ability of the carer or their family to make a booking with the facility, at least three months in advance of when they need respite.**

The strategy to implement these reforms should be through each facility’s license to operate.

While one can appreciate the economic imperative for the facility to maximize revenues, a more even playing field would ease the negotiation tension for myself, my mother and our families.

As part of this inquiry, a timely response on the two reforms referred to above, would be most appreciated.

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Principal Carer