

Input to the Terms of Reference for the Aged Care Royal Commission through Carers Australia

Background

Carers Tasmania has consulted with its members that are caring for a person over the age of 65, and with services providers associated directly or indirectly with the delivery of services to carers.

The degree of response from carers under a tight timeframe suggests this issue is of significant concern for them and they are highly invested in the outcomes of the Royal Commission.

Issues

Below are itemised comments regarding the terms of reference by key stakeholders and carers.

- There is need for acknowledgement, inclusion and collaboration with family carers as key providers of aged care. They play a significant role in navigating the aged care system, and they advocate and continue to care for family members in residential care. They substandard care has a flow on affect of carer stress and consequently, health and wellbeing
- There is currently no reference to palliative care and end of life needs of residents
- There could be a possible consideration of the recruitment and training practices of employment agencies – considering their “tick and flick” approach to encouraging those seeking employment into aged care training because there are employment opportunities regardless of their interest or being the ‘best fit’ for the industry
- The need for consideration of whether a medical or community model is most appropriate for ageing Australians, as the Four Corners program was medical focussed, and driven by nursing and doctors
- The possible need for the inclusion of medical practitioners in the terms of reference as they oversee care and the prescription of medication but don’t seem to have responsibility in aged care standards and accreditation
- The reality of the care in rural and remote locations. What are realistic expectations what is our tax system prepared to pay?
- The possible need to consider the impact of recent changes to the Aged Care Funding Instrument and the effect this has had on service models and care outcomes, particularly staffing levels within Residential Aged Care Facilities.
- The need for a standardised approach to training of aged care staff and the cost of staffing for ongoing training needs
- The risk approach to aged care standards and accreditation

- The need for laws and tools to deal with abuse
- How the current industrial relations system enables or holds back being able to provide quality, flexible, safe services to ageing Australians
- The concerns of aged care being provided under a not for profit system and the quality of services being compromised by funding models
- The lack of suitably qualified and experienced staff and the associated stressors and risks
- Lack of clinical or specialist knowledge in aged care staff– i.e. medical issues, mental health, behaviour management
- Complacent culture and the subjective implementation of complaints procedures
- Lack of inclusion of those with diverse needs within the aged care system

Carers Tasmania has significant concern regarding the impact of media coverage on this issue and possible distress and reduction of help seeking behaviour for carers.

Summary comments on Terms of Reference

Based on feedback, Carers Tasmania makes the following comments regarding the terms of reference.

- In principle, the terms of reference will cover most of the key issues currently occurring in aged care
- family carers require their own item in the terms of reference given they are key providers of aged care, from the community to the end-of-life, often with consequences for their own wellbeing
- The Inquiry's investigation of the quality of aged care should follow the whole aged care experience from services in the community, through to residential services and end-of-life care, whether that be in the community, or a residential setting
- There should be a shift from simply examining the extent of substandard care to its causes, particularly around funding and other issues impacting on the provision of adequate numbers of qualified, experienced and skilled staff
- A separate reference item may be required to fully explore the medical components of aged care
- While the exploration of home-based disability services is important, its inclusion in the terms of reference may diffuse the focus of the Royal Commission if it was to be included, given it is a separate sector with its own legislation and service delivery framework.
- It would be prudent to refer to minority groups within the terms of reference, to ensure a targeted approach to examining their experience and needs

Given the significance of the Royal Commission and the apparent carer and stakeholder engagement on this issue, Carers Tasmania will continue to be involved as it progresses.