



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Disabled young people placements in nursing homes needs new thinking

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor believes that policy needs to be developed to better cater for the needs of young people with disabilities who currently reside in Nursing Homes.

Mr Windsor was commenting on a submission given to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry into Aged care by the National Industry Association for Disability Services that identifies a number of problems relating to young people.

“According to the submission, there are around 6,000 people aged less than 65 years who live in aged care residential facilities.

Many of these are the victims of the barriers that surround the aged care and disability service systems.

The psychological welfare and social development of these younger people would be better served were they to be housed in the community, with appropriate levels of support,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor said that if a new approach to looking after our younger people was adopted, it would also free up places in residential care for our aged people.

“The submission indicates that one in four people currently seeking an aged care bed has to wait three months or longer to enter a residential care. The places vacated by younger people who relocate to community settings would therefore be easily filled. The submission further identifies that the principal barrier to this occurring is the disagreement between the Commonwealth and State governments about who has funding responsibility and the associated suspicion about cost shifting.

The suggested way forward in the submission requires a funding model that combines ongoing and indexed Commonwealth Health and Aged Care funding and State Disability Services funding which I would support.

Younger people who reside in nursing homes often have high-level physical support needs or complex medical needs (requiring ventilator support and gastronomy meals for example).

But the funding available to aged care services or to disability services is insufficient to support these younger people to live in the community. Funding formulae have failed to keep pace with the real costs of assisting people who have complex medical support needs and indeed some may have the opportunity to be rehabilitated to the extent that they may be able to go back into the community and not require life long care given intense physiotherapy and neurotherapy early in their recovery period that they are unable to access in a nursing home.

This would be the best outcome for everyone,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor said that he and Member for Northern Tablelands, Richard Torbay MP, had recently met with Challenge Armidale CEO Kevin Mead and has had meetings with people who have relatives who are in this unfortunate situation.

“We are looking to formulate a model in the New England that will provide a solution to the problem.

New England could be at the forefront of developing a creative solution to a national problem which will have the dual benefit of providing a better environment for the young people with disabilities and freeing up aged care beds for older people,” Mr Windsor said.

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