

Time to end the shame in aged care homes

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Aged care homes are places where our most frail and vulnerable older people live. How do we ensure the highest possible standards of care?

The federal government claims a consumer driven, free market based residential aged care system will provide 'world class' care. However, the so-called "consumers" are often frail, elderly people, many with dementia. How can they demand a high quality service on the free market?

There are around 2,700 aged care homes in Australia. Although some are excellent, many aged care homes operate without enough staff. Managers who are under pressure to meet their profit targets do so by reducing staff, placing vulnerable residents at risk.

When heart breaking stories about inadequate personal care, neglect, abuse and negligence are reported in the media, the aged care industry claims these stories as 'one-offs'. However, [independent research](#) suggests that recent reports about poor standards of care are merely the tip of the iceberg. This research describes serious systemic problems in our residential aged care system.

"Older people living in aged care home need to be protected in the form of effective regulation, mandated staff ratios and a rigorous accreditation system", says Dr Sarah Russell, Director, Aged Care Matter. "The care of vulnerable older people is too important to be left to the whims of the free market".

"There have been a large numbers of failures in the aged care system and regulatory framework", says Lynda Saltarelli, Aged Care Crisis. "These failures expose fundamental flaws in government policy".

According to Ken Wyatt "the provision of safe, quality care is non-negotiable and the health and wellbeing of senior Australians in aged care services is of paramount importance".

To fix our broken aged care system, the government must urgently address the failures in the regulatory framework. We need to feel reassured that government subsidies are being used to improve the quality of life of residents, not the pockets of providers.

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