

Thank you for allowing me to make a 2022-23 pre-budget submission.

How is it that I only found out there is such a thing as an annual pre-budget submission?

Nevertheless over time I have noticed that government policies and promises do not deliver on many of the available topics to submit on. My submission aims to improve Aged Care funding as has been identified by the Royal Commission. Therefore I call for all the Royal Commission recommendations to be fully funded. Adequate funding in the aged care sector will have positive outcomes for the following areas: The Human Rights for the elderly, Veterans Affairs, Job Services and Programs, Vocational Education Apprenticeship and skills, Workplace Health and Safety, Senior Australians, Aged Care, Disability Services and Charities and Not For Profits providing Aged Care.

To support my submission I include the Annual Report provided by the Chairman of the Board of the NFP Aged Care Facility I am employed by.

“Wow what a year it has been. Having coped with fires and the start of COVID 19 in the previous year it would have been nice to have some sort of normal. Alas that wasn't the case. We have had to endure floods and even worse conditions regarding COVID 19 in the 2021 year and afterwards.

It is a testament to our staff that we have made it through the past 2 years in a relatively sound position. Although our surplus from operations has dropped compared to our June 2020 result but we have fared much better than most in our industry. Far too many have made losses in the 2021 year with more than 50% of operators reporting losses and a large proportion of them have incurred cash losses which does not look good for their continued survival. To our staff we can only say thank you although it doesn't ever seem like enough to just say thanks.

During the year we have seen a significant staff movement to the disability sector where wages are higher (even for the same qualification) and conditions seem much easier. The governments place our industry under such stringent income levels, with little or no annual increases, while the disability sector appears to be a free for all with charges.

The near future does not seem to be going to assist with any solutions, as the Federal Government has deferred any meaningful response to the Royal Commission and certainly has been very silent on the matter of wage disparity for our workers. A recent report commissioned by the Aged

Care Workforce Industry Council stated that workers caring for our elderly relatives and friends are paid less than those packing supermarket shelves – a disparity that cannot continue. Combine that with the disability sector requiring an additional 84,000 staff by 2024 and it doesn't take much thinking to see we will all soon be in crisis in the industry.

So, what are our prospects? Thankfully we are in a sound financial position without any external bank debt. Thus, we will be able to make it through the current situation as long as the government acts quickly – 12 months for some will be too late. As many of you will know we are currently building a previously approved new wing on one of our facilities. Sadly with our current staff availability we will be unable to open this facility. In fact we are

already restricting new residents entering our Aged Care Facilities based on staff numbers. Should this continue we may even have to close additional units due to the lack of staff.

Many of our registered nurses which are required by laws imposed by the government are supplied by agencies that charge a premium of 20% of the wage. The one response the federal government has made to the Royal Commission has been to indicate anticipated acceptance of the recommendation to increase the required number of registered nurses time spent with residents each day. This will require us to employ many more nurses in a time when they are mainly leaving the industry and if we have to pay a premium on their wages with no income increases something else will have to be reduced.

I apologise for this report not addressing the normal building updates etc but I feel it far more important to make you aware of the greater issues in the hope that you may be able to discuss this matter with any of our elected representatives so we have a louder voice.

I will finish by again thanking the Staff that have remained with us and also my fellow Directors for their work throughout the year in a time when we have hardly met face to face.”

It is self evident that the industry is in crisis and required budget support to restore the respect and dignity of our elderly that so often is spoken off by the government. Hunt and Colbeck have failed to understand the Aged Care sector and therefore have failed to advocate adequately to fix the mess. Therefore I humbly submit my submission hoping for an improved outcome that has been needed for a long time.