

[REDACTED]

From: Ross B [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 8 March 2024 4:22 AM
To: Aged Care Legislative Reform
Subject: Feedback on the development of the new Aged Care Act - New Aged Care Act Consultation

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Department of Health and Aged Care - New Aged Care Act Consultation
GPO Box 9848
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

To whom it may concern,

Please excuse the nature and untimely nature of this communication so close to the submission closure date. Unfortunately I was only recently made aware of the opportunity existing after having contact with [REDACTED] who kindly provided the information.

With so little free time to fully digest/ comprehend the tome of information available in relation to *the* Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, The Exposure Draft Aged Care Bill 2023, related online resources / documents and survey, my concerns, which follow below, are potentially inappropriate and not what the intended purpose of the submission process is.

They are however derived from of our family's/my experiences to date since 2021 in the "Aged Care System".

Brief background:

Aged 62, I care full time for my Father who will be 91 this March 2024 and requires high care after impairment from strokes.

Have been the full time, primary carer since October 2022.

Prior to the passing of my Mother in Dec 2022 I have been caring for them both, part time, while running a business after relocating from Victoria in 2016 to assist and enjoy their twilight years.

I/we entered the Aged Care System (with ignorance) on behalf of my parents in 2021.

General Comments:

While there is an abundance of online information, it is (please pardon the expression) a rabbit hole / labyrinth of confusion with a dearth of ease of use, comprehensible information, and options. The advanced aged, and many not familiar, or employed in the Aged Care Industry, elderly Australian citizens embarking the gradual transition to care would likely require an advocate with advanced navigation skills.

In my parent's case, who's care requirements become accelerated in early 2020, and have current day tech inadequacies many take for granted, the process to date has been unnecessarily complicated and confusing and overtly time consuming.

Direct Experience/s

On entry to the Aged Care system in 2021 my father was issued an Aged care number which was reissued later leaving him with 2! This occurred without my/our knowledge, for reasons never explained definitively to us or with any system/logical process.

The confusion and difficulties that followed until this error was identified are too numerous to list here.

He did however lose his place in the que to receive his in home care assessment from My Aged Care.

He was assessed at home eventually on Dec 19th 2023 – a period, seemingly unacceptable and unfair, of more than 2 years following the issue of his 1st AC number.

He was classified as level 4 – with another approximate 6-9 months wait to endure and approximately 4 months before level 2 could commence before that.

The assessment did provide codes to assist with ‘In Home Care’ services which Accredited agencies / Industry approved organisations require.

1 of these codes was for the Short Term Restorative Care (STRC) program. We were duly appointed, by referral from My Aged Care by 1 STRC program approved provider on 10/1/2024.

No alternative SRTC organisations were provided.

A 90 minute in home assessment/interview followed.

We were verbally advised to sign a series of documents accompanying a fee schedule immediately to accelerate the start of ‘The STRC Program’

The time required to read and comprehend the disclosures and client contracts required many more hours the visiting assessor had to spare.

The inference here is the soft pressure to sign without due diligence or consideration for the several pages (30 plus) of explanatory and contractual wordings. Without proof, the sense was the assessor was incentivised to do so for KPI measures or other.

Of most concern the supplied Fee Schedule stated clearly a 30% Administration fee would apply. During the assessment my questions to discover what the 30% figure represented in real terms was not provided, or any breakdown of the funding remaining for direct client care.

I was advised to call My Aged Care or to try and find it on the internet!

I attempted both to no avail and after contacting the providers office via telephone they maintained the information was not clear at hand.

Surely open disclosure and business best practice would be to provide the information on the fee schedule to assist an informed decision for potential assistance recipients?

After some persistence the information was supplied in writing on 5/2/2024.

STRC Funding Package over 8 weeks (56 days) - \$13659.52

The provider Home Care Admin Fee - \$4098.08 or \$78.18/ day or \$512.25/week

Funds remaining contributing to direct client care (Aids, services, home mods and equipment) - \$9561.44

I believe and request all approved providers should be directed to openly disclose Government provided funding assistance allocations on their client provided 1st contact documentation.

Subsequent to the data mining required above, I provided a written request to the Restorative Care Assessor and (as advised by the assessor) Clinical Quality Manager to seek answers to some questions and ambiguities with reference to their fee schedule and contract wording on the 22/2/2024.

The receipt of my information request was acknowledged the following day by return email on 24/2/2024.

The requested clarifications were not supplied with the acknowledgement though a time frame on the service eligibility was:

“The STRC program approval started on the 22nd of Dec 2023 and expires on the 23rd June 2024. It is required to commence before the expiry date”.

As I author this no answers have been provided as of 7/3/2024.

I believe and request all approved providers should be directed to respond to fair and reasonable contract disclosure document and fee schedule queries, in writing, within a mandated time frame preventing further un warranted delays to client care.

Of note in the approved providers fee schedule was the following paragraph:

'Aid & Equipment Items = cost plus 10% (percentage is capped at \$300.00) External suppliers = cost plus 10% (additional fee schedule displaying preferred providers charges is available.'

After consideration for administration fees stated above @ \$512/week, this is akin to a distasteful commercial extortion rort of funds that should be available to providing client care as the funds were intended.

I believe and request all approved providers be directed to provide Aid & Equipment Items at cost, be they from providers preferred suppliers (which they may or may not have commercial agreements with) or from client preferred suppliers passing industry approved manufacturers quality mandates or Australian standards, without any percentage surcharge applied to those purchases for direct client care.

Sadly the Aged care journey I've witnessed and are experiencing leaves much to be desired but is far limited to the few points expressed above.

If in some way my concerns can have a positive bearing on the mandated service, administration, and costing framework providers need adhere to it has been worth it, I thank you for your time considering them in your endeavours to improve and legislate Aged Care improvements for those who rely it – The Aged Care recipients.

Name of referred Provider Organisation with held but available if appropriate or required on reply.

Kind Regards
Ross Barblett

