



**The Honourable Greg Donnelly MLC**

**Elder Abuse**

**ADJOURNMENT SPEECH**

**10<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

Mr President,

Honourable Members and the public at large awoke yesterday morning to the heartbreaking story in the media about the circumstances surrounding the tragic death of one of the state's senior citizens, Shirley Carter. Shirley Carter, who was a resident at the Opal Raymond Terrace Gardens nursing home died in October 2016. The day before the death of Shirley Carter her daughter, Jayne Carter, was told by staff of the nursing home that her mother had been found with maggots in her mouth.

Jayne Carter was, of course, completely 'bowled over' by the information passed on to her by the nursing home

staff the day before her mother's death. It came as no surprise that Jayne Carter is calling for a full and transparent investigation into the matter and the circumstances around her mother's death. I certainly hope and expect that this will be done expeditiously and that the Minister for Ageing, the Hon. Tanya Davies, will take an active role in the matter including providing support to family members left shocked and angry from the whole incident.

Mr President,

This is a shocking case, there can be no doubt about that. I do appreciate that the operation of nursing homes essentially falls within the purview of the Commonwealth Government and not the State Government. However, Shirley Carter was a resident of New South Wales and so are her children, extended family, friends and fellow residents. To have a loved one pass away in such circumstances is profoundly sad.

I cite this case not to gratuitously shock but once again, as I have done on previous occasions in this House, highlight the vulnerability of the aged, infirm and mentally diminished senior citizens.

Honourable members would be aware that General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2, as it was then called, tabled its report entitled *Elder Abuse in New South Wales* in June 2016. That report produced 11 unanimously endorsed recommendations. Earlier this year the Government, as is required, provided a written response to the recommendations. A copy of both the inquiry report with the recommendations and the Government's response are available via the committee's webpage on the New South Wales Parliament website. I have to say I and many others I have spoken to found the Government's response tepid, shallow and underwhelming. Given all the evidence that, as a result of the inquiry, is now on the public record, I and everybody who was involved and participated in the

inquiry expected a far more comprehensive and robust response. I note that the New South Wales State Budget is only a matter of weeks away. I sincerely hope that the Government will make some budget announcements in the forthcoming State Budget to assist and tackle elder abuse in New South Wales.

In conclusion can I draw Honourable Members attention to the fact that the Australian Law Reform Commission is about to provide their report to the Commonwealth Attorney-General entitled *Protecting the Rights of Older Australians From Abuse*. For anybody interested in the issue of elder abuse can I strongly encourage them to have a look at the Discussion Paper released in December 2016 as part of the Australian Law Reform Commission's inquiry. It is a document almost 200 pages long. It is an excellent document that covers a range of key issues relating to elder abuse. It has detailed footnotes and references. I sincerely hope the Australian Law Reform Commission report proves to be a significant stimulus to initiating concrete steps to tackling elder abuse in Australia. There can be no doubt

that the time has come for our whole nation to come to terms with the terrible blight of elder abuse, confront it and commit itself to completely eradicating it.

Mr President,

I also challenge those Honourable Members who so enthusiastically support euthanasia/assisted suicide legislation to pause and ask themselves how we as a society can guarantee (not just hope) that such proposed legislation will not and can not be abused today and into the future when we have an utterly helpless senior citizen languishing in a nursing home, with a flyblown mouth, the day before she dies.

May Shirley Carter's soul rest in peace.

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