

**MEDIA RELEASE**

Date: 18 September 2018

**All older people deserve dignified care and access to advocacy services**Seniors Rights Service, Sydney Australia

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In NSW alone 360,000 people receive aged care services – either in residential care facilities or services delivered directly in people’s own homes. While Seniors Rights Service advocates for improved service quality for almost 4,000 of these aged care recipients, who make contact with us, we are deeply concerned that this is just the tip of the iceberg. We believe that thousands more people need rights-based advocacy to prevent neglect and abuse and to ensure they receive the quality aged care services they deserve.

ABC Four Corners report into aged care screened on Monday 17 September revealed a frightening level of neglect and abuse of older people across Australia – older people who have entrusted their care to our nation’s aged care system. This is abuse and neglect of the most vulnerable people in our society. It is clear there are too many people who are not receiving the quality of care that society expects.

Seniors Rights Service manages to visit around 300 aged care facilities across NSW each year. We ensure residents are aware of their rights and how they can contact us if they experience issues with their care. There are more than 900 facilities across NSW. Without appropriate resourcing it is impossible to visit every aged care facility in NSW annually and this is replicated in many other jurisdictions. Seniors Rights Service is today calling for more resources to be able to ensure the safety of each and every resident of aged care services in NSW and across Australia.

Russell Westacott, CEO of Seniors Rights Service said: “In recent years our advocates have been refused entry or had our services declined by 30 aged care facilities across the state. This leaves residents of those facilities unaware of their rights and how to access advocacy services. This is contrary to Australia’s Aged Care Act of 1997. Preventing access to advocates must not continue and begs the question: why are some aged care services denying access to aged care advocacy services? Every older person and their representative is entitled to independent education and awareness of their rights – this must be upheld!”

It’s essential that people receiving aged care services have *immediate* access to advocacy to ensure issues of concern can be addressed early – which is often able to prevent potential longer-term neglect. Equally staff of aged care service providers also need to engage with this education.

Westacott said: “Aged care advocates are vital to ensure older people’s rights are paramount when receiving aged care services. People receiving care are vulnerable and they deserve best practice care and respect. I welcome the announcement of a Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. It is time to draw a line and demand that *all* of our aged care services reflect the nation’s expectations that *all* our older citizens receive dignified and worthy care.”

Seniors Rights Service is a leading agency in terms of Australia’s response to the abuse of older people. We work with many partners – including aged care providers – to ensure elder abuse in Australia is stopped. It is demeaning to all of us that some aged care providers and workers are guilty of this sort of abuse.

More details regarding Seniors Rights Service can be found at: [seniorsrightsservice.org.au](http://seniorsrightsservice.org.au)

Find our leading final report here – [Abuse of Older People: A Community Response](#)

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