



## Tanunda Lutheran Home Inc.

27<sup>th</sup> April 2020

The Hon Scott Morrison MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

I feel compelled to personally write to you following the latest statements in regard to visitation restrictions within aged care homes. I am frustrated and disappointed.

In a way of introduction: I have 45 years nursing experience, 33 years military health experience, at least 20 years' experience working in the aged care industry, the last 5 years as Chief Executive Officer and Director of Nursing of a not for profit church facility.

Leading and managing Tanunda Lutheran Home Inc (TLH) has been a privilege and a challenge with the pace of changes over the past years. TLH is a 120 bed facility, where care and wellbeing is provided, 100 independent living units providing retirement living services, 200 staff are employed, and 120 volunteers support the organisation. Having a volunteer Board of Management who are all from the local community ensures strategic direction is positive and ensures it is meeting the community of the Barossa Valley's expectations.

As the Chief Executive Officer, I pride myself in being well educated and involved in all things related to the aged care and retirement living industry. Many hours are spent in researching, studying, and attending meetings and conferences to keep abreast. Change is second nature to me. I am a visionary and encourage strategic change in the way I manage the TLH services to ensure our Residents are empowered, cared for and satisfied with the high quality care and services we pride ourselves on delivering in conjunction with our Residents.

Over the years of working in the aged care industry I have always felt supported by the residents, their families and the staff. I personally practice open communication with the residents, family members and staff. My management style is one of respect and inclusiveness of all who live or work in the organisation.

Accepting change is not always easy and I have been able to adapt many ways of doing things to gain support from others in the organisation. Meeting the current aged care standards is not an issue for our staff or myself. We are well versed to Resident Centred Care and good human resource management.

However, it really is now becoming so difficult when there are changes being made with minimal consultation within the aged care industry. The amount of negative media is not doing us any favours and is damaging the reputation of organisations doing the right thing. Our Residents or their families

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27 Bridge Street  
Tanunda SA 5352

**Phone – Reception**  
08 8563 7777

**Fax – Admin**  
08 8563 7799

**Fax – Nursing**  
08 8563 7790

**Email**  
info@tlhome.com.au

[www.tlhome.com.au](http://www.tlhome.com.au)

are not even consulted prior to negative and generalised comments about the industry is made by the Government, projected through the media. The negative comments from our own government about the work we pride ourselves on makes our employees feel disheartened, targeted and stressed.

To keep a not for profit, stand-alone organisation financially viable and meeting all the incoming changes requires me to make the difficult and complex operational decisions. Some of the decisions are more positive than others. It is really challenging when leaders (even at your level) are negative towards the management of facilities.

In the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic all decisions made at our facility have been to ensure the safety of our residents and staff. At no stage over the past weeks were our residents isolated from others in the facility or from their families. Various technology was implemented to support contact with families. Inventive methods were used for families to see each other without going outside. Testing has been conducted (which comes at a cost). Strict surveillance was initiated in the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak. TLH has exhausted attempts to obtain Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to use should we need to extend our current infection control resources. The total cost for the PPE came at \$170,000. Making this decision was extremely stressful as it meant our organisation finances went further into deficit. The expenditure was supported by the Executive Team and Board Members.

Having the negative comments from some government leaders (including yourself and the Minister for Ageing) does not make any personal feelings any better. I know professionally and personally that I am doing what is best for the residents and staff. It is difficult to accept that I have be tarred with the same brush as those not doing the right thing, even worse, that National Leaders have tarred my amazing staff in the same manner.

In closing Prime Minister, all I ask is for those in leadership positions, when making comments to the media acknowledge and respect that generalisations can cause great impact on the professionals upholding their standard of care to each facility. The effects of the current media following your comments again put aged care and executives like myself in a bad light increasing confusion and negativity. Please consider your words carefully and if there was ever a time, it is now to pay particular attention to those Executives in aged care organisations doing the right thing.

Yours faithfully,



Lee Martin  
Chief Executive Officer/Director of Nursing  
Tanunda Lutheran Home Inc

Cc: Mr Tony Pasin, MP, Federal Member for Barker  
[Tony.Pasin.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Tony.Pasin.MP@aph.gov.au)