




Speech By
Michael Berkman

MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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**HEALTH COMMUNITIES, DISABILITY SERVICES AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY
VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE**

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (3.32 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution on the health committee's report into the closure of the Earle Haven aged-care facility. As others have mentioned, this was an unexpected but in some ways timely detour amongst the committee's broader inquiry into aged care, palliative care and voluntary assisted dying. I say it was timely certainly not because anyone on the committee wanted to find ourselves there; it was timely because it was such an instructive case study in the risks of profit driven provision of this kind of essential service.

Other speakers have referred already to some of the impacts on the residents that we heard in evidence in this part of the inquiry. That is one of the things that will stick with me most. These were incredibly frail people. Many of them were suffering from dementia or other forms of ill health which made it so difficult for them to deal with such an unsettling experience. These are people for whom familiarity with their surroundings is so important, so to be moved on at such short notice and the challenge of finding somewhere else for them to live was quite extraordinary to see. I want to echo the comments that have been made previously about how impressive the response from the ambulance and health department was in circumstances that should not have arisen.

As has been described already, it was a pretty straight up and down commercial dispute. The deputy chair and member for Caloundra called it a battle of egos but I think it was much simpler than that. These were two companies which, within the framework that exists at the moment, were both out to make the most money they could from the provision of this essential service. We have all heard in the contributions and we all agree that this is something that should not have happened and it should never happen again.

One thing that concerns me is that the backdrop for this incident was not unique, and I do not see that we have really gone any way in terms of making sure it does not happen again. We still have arrangements that allow an approved aged-care provider to outsource the provision of care to another company that is looking to make money out of it and provide services at the least possible cost. Often times we are dealing with very large companies in the provision of aged care. These are companies that are listed and that have a legal obligation to maximise returns for their shareholders. In those circumstances, I do not think we should be particularly surprised that, when their profit motives are not being served anymore, they drop these elderly and very vulnerable people like they are hot and get out of there. A lot of work obviously needs to be done in the aged-care sector to make sure we do not see this sort of behaviour repeated. I am very keen to see the response to the royal commission, as we all are.

I want to express my thanks again, as we always do, to the secretariat for the enormous amount of work they did in supporting the committee throughout that massive inquiry last year. I want to reiterate my thanks to counsel assisting, Ruth O'Gorman. She did an outstanding job with a huge amount of

material and in very short time frames to get the committee across what we needed to know and to also make sure that the evidence, the conduct and the scrutiny of everyone involved in this, particularly those aged-care providers, was laid bare. I commend the report to the House.