

Hon Mark Butler MP
Minister for Health and Aged Care
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

(minister.butler@health.gov.au)

Gummun Place Aged Care Hostel, Merriwa - Securing the Future

Dear Mark

I am writing to you in respect of Gummun Place Hostel, a small aged-care facility in Merriwa NSW (in the Upper Hunter Shire). Gummun Place Hostel is in an MMM5 community. Our facility was built from the ground up with donations, fundraising and grant applications from our community. Needless to say, we are very proud of the facility but recently it has become a highly sensitive political issue in our district – and will remain so until the question of the facility's future is determined.

The facility is currently under the management of Upper Hunter Shire Council and has been running at a deficit of some \$400,000 to \$600,000 a year (with the last financial year being one of the larger deficits). This deficit puts our facility in jeopardy.

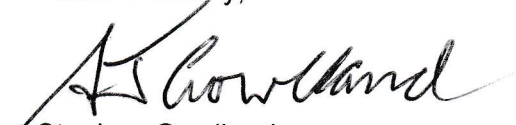
Our community goals for Gummun Place Hostel align directly with the aged vision "to reform aged care [and] restore dignity to older Australians". However, as a facility in an MMM5 community, we find the ability to meet this vision extremely difficult. These difficulties are compounded by the impending changes from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

Many of the issues outlined in the report from the Royal Commission, *Final Report: Care, Dignity and Respect*, are reflected in our facility. For example, we face insufficient staffing, fewer care options, geographic isolation, and are struggling to ensure **equity of access** to aged care. Many of our residents have family close by. If the facility does not remain open, we fear the residents' overall wellbeing will be compromised, family and community cohesion will be lost, hospital beds will be taken up with people who should otherwise be in specialised aged care – to name just a few of the issues.

We were very disappointed when, last November, you refused a request from our Mayor, Maurice Collision, for urgent funding for the facility at a time when our hospitals are under duress (closure of our facility – and similar facilities – will only add to the demands placed on hospitals), and the Royal Commission into Aged Care has highlighted the need for equity of access and yet by the very nature of being in a MMM5 community we are not getting equity of access (these are only two of our current challenges).

We respectfully request a meeting with your office in order to tease out these issues and better understand how the Federal, State and Local governments might come together to solve the types of issues we face in ensuring our most vulnerable residents are cared for.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Gowlland
President

Tuesday, 28 January 2025

MERRIWA DISTRICT PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.