



Senator the Hon Anne Ruston
Shadow Minister for Health and Aged Care
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Senate
Parliament House
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Gummun Place Aged Care Hostel, Merriwa - Securing the Future

Dear Anne

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 (Modified Monash Model, category 5). Our facility was built from the ground up with donations, fundraising and grant applications from our community. 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 the 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 – coupled with being in an MMM5 community and the impending changes from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety – puts our facility in grave jeopardy.

Our community goals for Gummun Place Hostel align directly with the Federal Government's 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.

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 are seeking financial assistance from the Federal Government so that this vital community asset that can be financially viable, provides the highest standard of care, ensures our residents remain in the community, and allows families to stay connected through the generations.

Any assistance you can provide now or in the future to ensure this essential facility remains operational in our town would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Stephen Gowlland'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Stephen Gowlland
President

Wednesday, 29 January 2025

MERRIWA DISTRICT PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.