Aged Care

QUESTION

Thursday, 13 February 2020
Aged Care

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:31): My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. Why do over one-quarter of younger people who go into aged care die within a single year of entry?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:31): In terms of individual cases, it would be very much dependent on the circumstances. I would say this: younger people who go into aged care would be going in because they have a very serious condition, whether it’s an acquired brain injury, some form of degenerative condition or some other form of harm, whether through accident, injury or illness. Let us be very clear about that. Having said that, I want to make this point: the person who wrote into the terms of the royal commission the involvement and engagement and treatment of younger people in residential aged care was this person—the Prime Minister. I had the privilege of sitting with him when we drafted those terms, and that was his personal passion. That was the focus and the humanity and the concern.

What we have also seen is that we have accepted the royal commission’s embrace of those terms of reference. In particular, there are three targets which the royal commission included in its interim findings precisely to address the care and concern and cause of any harm relating to young people in aged care: firstly, that no people under the age of 65 should enter residential care by 2022—we have accepted and embraced that; secondly, that no people under the age of 45 should be living in aged care by 2022—that's living in, let alone entering; and, thirdly, that no people under the age of 65 should be living in residential aged care by 2025. These are standards which have never been set before. These are goals which have never been set before. These are targets which have never been set before and which we will achieve. It’s a deep and powerful commitment.

So I would make this point: under the former government, the number of younger people living in residential aged care moved from 6,577 in 2007 to 6,478 in 2010. Now it is down to 5,606, and we are decreasing still further. It has become the priority for the Prime Minister and the relevant minister, and what we have seen is that the number of younger people entering residential aged care has also decreased, from 536 in the March-to-June quarter of 2017 to 436 in the March-to-June quarter of 2019—a 22 per cent decline, before the royal commission’s interim findings. The reason that these standards have been set is that the commission found the importance of and need for them. But the reason the commission had that power was that this person, the member for Cook, the Prime Minister of Australia, personally drafted them.