Dear Senators

I would like to make known my experiences concerning palliative care in nursing homes and hospitals.

Sadly my husband died earlier this year and I am so thankful and grateful that the care he received in hospital was so good. I cannot speak highly enough of the doctors and all the staff (at Redlands Hospital). I was kept informed all the time and I and my family were treated with consideration and our wishes respected. The nursing staff was so caring and efficient.

Tom had been in aged care, and I have no complaints about the care he received for the year or so he was there, but I learned later that there was another person in care at the time in much the same position as we were, but they did not fare so well. The care facilities are not equipped to take on the task of palliative care. I stayed in the hospital with Tom, so I know that there were people coming to check on him all of the time, day and night. They found a big chair for me and even brought meals in to me. I do not remember the medical terms, but they had ways of administering medication without having to use injections all the time and this was also monitored regularly. This is not available in the nursing home, nor is there staff to administer or monitor it. Also they do not have the skills or the time to put into that area of care. It is a specific type of training and there are very few of the aged care nurses who have that expertise, in fact most of the aged care "nurses" are carers, there are very few RN's to care for the residents.

The lady whose husband died in the nursing home around the same time as Tom, did not receive the support that I had, and consequently I think she has not been able to cope with the loss as well as I have done. We both have a house in the same complex, so I see her occasionally, and it has been very difficult for her to move on. This is due to lots of things, I know, but I feel that most of it is because the home was not able to deal with palliative care. Neither she nor her husband received the care that we did, not physically or emotionally.

What to do? There is nowhere for our loved ones to go. I suppose there should be more palliative care homes, or even beds, available…..I was lucky to have Tom in the hospital, because the nursing homes do not have staff or equipment to cope, and with the type of residents that they have, they are faced with this problem all of the time. It worries me that people are not able to receive the care they need at this critical time in their lives. The privately run homes are getting more concerned for the shareholders than their residents – so then it just gets down to the amount of money that can be spent and how far it can go. If there is less regulation, won't this make the problem worse? Training of staff is one area that could do with a bit more investigation, especially with palliative care, and ratio of nurses to

residents, as this may not incur such a huge cost. There is quite a lot of voluntary work going on at those places which is pretty much unnoticed but unfortunately this leaves a void if the resident moves away or dies.

I will be very interested to hear the outcome of your investigation, and wish you well with your deliberations. Palliative care is a very much undervalued resource and the folk who provide it need our gratitude.

Thankyou