

STATEMENT – Karen Ann Heard

No. NTG-0206

ROYAL COMMISSION INTO AGED CARE QUALITY AND SAFETY

NOTICE TO PRODUCE DOCUMENTS AND GIVE INFORMATION OR A STATEMENT IN WRITING

To: The Solicitor Assisting the Royal Commission



1. My name is Karen Ann Heard, of [REDACTED] in the State of New South Wales.
2. My current occupation is the Nurse Administrator for People Care Pty Ltd (**People Care**).
3. My qualifications are a Bachelor of Nursing (1978) and Bachelor of Midwifery (Equivalent) (1979), both obtained in Blacktown, Sydney.
4. For the past 18 years I have worked in the aged care industry in a variety of roles including: Registered Nurse; Deputy Director of Nursing; Facility Manager; Aged Care Quality Assessor and External Consultant.
5. Prior to my current role, I was an External Consultant for People Care, employed to carry out clinical audits. I was asked to do this in response to concerns regarding continued resident complaints, and a lack of consultation with changes to providers and care concerns. I audited the care and services provided to residents in Hibiscus House and Orchid House in May and June 2019 with a view to measuring elements of care including structure, processes and potential outcomes of care. Prior to that, I was an External Consultant/Acting Facility Manager for both People Care and HelpStreet Villages (Qld) Pty Ltd (**HelpStreet**) at Hibiscus House and Orchid House. As a result of these roles I am very familiar with the staff, the facility and the residents of both Hibiscus House and Orchid House.
6. I had no oral communication with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (**Safety Commission**) or the Department of Health (**Department**) during the period 1 May 2019 to 11 July 2019 about any dispute between People Care and HelpStreet, the potential cessation of care, an evacuation plan or the like.
7. However, on the evening of 11 July 2019 I had numerous conversations with authorities about why there was no need for an evacuation.
8. On 11 July 2019, I arrived at Hibiscus House at approximately 3pm. I came to Hibiscus House as I was contacted by [REDACTED] earlier that day. [REDACTED] is the daughter of

██████████ (a resident), who notified me that there were some concerning events happening at Hibiscus House and that I should attend urgently.

9. In response I contacted Bruce Lang via phone to advise him and Mr Miller about the removal of furnishings, bedding and other items, and also to tell them they may need to attend to see what was happening. I made the decision at 12.30pm, after speaking with Mr Miller, to drive to Nerang, as he had asked for assistance.
10. I then called ██████████ an employee of HelpStreet, and asked her to advise me of what was occurring. She stated she had no idea, however, she confirmed HelpStreet were taking furnishings. She also told me she was supporting residents and their families. During this conversation I spoke with ██████████ (Registered Nurse) to ensure the safety of residents. She advised me that Mr Miller and Kris Bunker were having verbal altercations in the middle of Hibiscus House and she had to ask them to move to a quieter area. Also during this conversation, I spoke with the catering manager of Miller Enterprises, as I knew that she had been asked to provide hydration to residents. I asked if she could prepare to cater for residents that night and maybe onwards, depending on what the outcome was going to be.
11. ██████████ informed me the residents of Hibiscus House were going to be sent to hospital and that all HelpStreet staff had been terminated. I voiced my concern to ██████████ about sending the residents to hospital as they were not sick and the hospital would not be equipped to care for approximately 70 residents.
12. While en route to Hibiscus House, I telephoned an employee who previously worked at Hibiscus House. I explained that we may need resources to assist in caring for the residents. Within a few hours, approximately 30 recent and former employees were in attendance on site and ready to provide care to the residents. These employees had previously delivered care to the residents of Hibiscus House and were familiar with the premises and the residents. The care they provided on 11 July included providing emotional support, hydration, continence management, personal hygiene and adequate nutrition.
13. Shortly after arriving in the early afternoon, I had a conversation with the Queensland Ambulance Services Commander (**Commander**) near the nurse station of Hibiscus House. I do not recall if anyone else was in attendance. I recall that during the conversation:
 - a. I introduced myself to the Commander, and I produced my Driver's Licence as a form of identification at his request. I do not recall his name.
 - b. I explained that I worked for Mr. Miller as an external consultant.
 - c. He asked me if I could help this situation in any way.
 - d. I said I had worked at Hibiscus House for approximately two and a half years.
 - e. I told the Commander I was the previous External Consultant and I believed I could provide assistance.
 - f. I explained to the Commander that I could confidentially guarantee 72 hours of care for the residents. I was satisfied that there was sufficient food, fluid, linen and bedding. I was aware that some mattresses had been removed, but there were 19

empty beds from which mattresses could be taken. I observed that some medical supplies had been taken, but I deemed there to be enough for 72 hours. I was also aware that individual resident medication had not been taken. I told the Commander that there was no need to remove the residents and that it would cause unnecessary stress if they were to be removed.

14. During the afternoon and evening of 11 July 2019, I had many conversations with people at Hibiscus House, including Mr Miller, various residents and various staff members to discuss the status of the situation, the welfare of the residents and other operational matters. I do not remember the exact details of the conversations.
15. Later in the afternoon, I received a phone message that Nicole Jervis of Queensland Health wanted to speak to me. I located Telecia Tuccori who was the Clinical Care Manager for HelpStreet. I asked her to attend the phone call with me as I believed it was in relation to the care being provided at Hibiscus House. I called Nicole Jervis and told her that Telecia was on the call with me because she was the Clinical Care Manager. I told Nicole that there was no need to send the residents away. I explained to her that I believed I could provide 72 hours of care. I explained that during the 72 hours I could build a longer-term care plan. I also explained that during the 72 hours, our team could hydrate, medicate, feed and otherwise care for the residents.
16. At approximately 5pm I reiterated my belief to the Commander that I could ensure care for 72 hours, during which time a longer-term plan could be generated. I confirmed that I could provide the necessary staff during this period.
17. I further explained to the Commander, that not only do we have the staff, we have the knowledge. We know the residents and their needs. I said that if you send them to other nursing homes they won't know the residents and won't have the necessary records. I explained we could not give the other homes the documents because HelpStreet had taken their records.
18. The Commander had two meetings that I was aware of throughout the afternoon and evening. On each occasion, I asked if I could attend because I believed my knowledge of the facility, staff and residents would be important in making an informed decision. On each occasion, my request was denied.
19. After the second meeting a police officer took the role of Commander. The Police Commander called myself and Kris Bunker over for a discussion. I am not sure if Mr. Miller was there. The Police Commander said he was declaring a disaster or emergency (or words to that effect). The Police Commander asked us to help. Kris Bunker and I said we would help. I believe I told the Police Commander that our staff could provide care to the residents.
20. After the police interview, throughout the remainder of the night of Thursday 11th July each resident was clinically assessed by the disaster team. Medication was provided to the residents by the disaster team, with assistance from the staff at People Care. Each resident after they were assessed and given their medication, they were prepared with some personal belongings, and then individually transferred to the outlying residential aged care facilities. The transfer was completed by approximately 1am Friday 12th July.

21. At approximately 9am Friday 12th July, representatives from two government agencies came to Hibiscus House. The representatives were from the Safety Commission and the Department. The Safety Commission representatives asked for permission to enter the premises and briefed myself and the People Care nursing staff. The representatives announced they were commencing a review audit.
22. My discussion with the Department was in relation to resident logistics, including resident personal items, medications and the like.

Date: 2 August 2019

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Heard', written over a horizontal line.

Karen Ann Heard