



Royal Commission
into Aged Care Quality and Safety

Statement of Phillip Alfred Dunlop

Name: Phillip Alfred Dunlop
Date of birth: [REDACTED]
Address: Known to the Royal Commission
Date: 25 October 2019

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I am prepared to give to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. This statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
2. The views I express in this statement are my own based on my own knowledge, except when they are based on information I have received. Where I rely on information, I believe that information to be true.
3. Where direct speech is referred to in this statement, it is provided in words, or words to the effect of those, which to the best of my recollection, were used at the time.

Background

4. My name is Phillip Alfred Dunlop. I am 73 years old. I live with my wife, Suzanne (Sue) Maree Dunlop, in a small town. The town is between Bathurst and Cowra, three hours from Mudgee and four hours from Sydney. We normally travel to Bathurst or Orange to see medical specialists. We live on a property that is only accessible by 16 km of tar road. The last five kilometres is an all-weather gravel or 'dirt' road.
5. My wife, Sue, is 72 years old. Sue has limited mobility due to severe arthritis in both of her legs and her back. Sue also has torn rotator cuffs in both shoulders which means that she can't lift her arms up to do anything.
6. In around late 2017 Sue applied for aged care. She called up My Aged Care with assistance from our daughter. About three or four weeks later, somebody came out the house and did an assessment. On 2 November 2017, Sue was approved for a Level Two package. We got in touch with **Provider UJ**. They were very helpful so we went with them. There was only a problem when the normal carer wasn't available. They would send men out that were hopeless. Sue was on a \$10 a day program. They contacted Sue and told her that they were no longer able to do that program so we would have to go somewhere else.
7. Our daughter noticed that Sue was getting a lot worse health wise so she asked age care to do another assessment. On 15 January 2018, Sue was assessed as a Level Four. No Level Four packages were available. In the meantime, she was approved for a

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Level Three home care package. We decided to move Sue's package to [Provider UK] because we were told that services were no longer available at [Provider UJ]. While Sue was on a Level Three package she received about three hours of care a week. Sue and I told [Provider UK] that she needed more, but they said that was the most they could offer because they didn't have the staff. No one from [Provider UK] came out to explain the services and what was available. When we again requested more services, we were told that they didn't have staff. A staff member said 'If you needed more services, move to another provider.'

8. Sue continued on a Level Three package with [Provider UK] while she waited for her higher level package to be available. Around nine months later Sue received the upgraded Level Four package. The level of services we received from [Provider UK] did not change with the increase in package.

Issues with the dirt road

9. Sue had been receiving home care from [Provider UK] since late 2018. In around mid-2018, there was a change in management at our local branch. Since then we noticed the service really start to decline. Whenever we would ask for something they always seemed to say no. As an example, in around February or March 2018, Sue realised she needed a seat over the toilet for safety. I called [Provider UK] and requested the seat. They told me that they would organise it for us. Weeks passed and nothing happened. Sue and I called and emailed [Provider UK] several times and they would say that they were looking into it but nothing ever happened. Whenever we would raise an issue or request extra help, they kept saying, 'If you're not happy, change providers.'
10. On 20 December 2018, I got a call from [Provider UK] saying the two carers nearly rolled their car driving home along our dirt road. They told me that Sue's services were suspended due to safety. This is the same dirt road carers have been driving down for the past two years. [Provider UK] said they would not reinstate the services until they do a safety assessment. We tried to call and but we were told our co-ordinator wasn't available but she would never respond to our messages. They didn't seem to care that Sue needed help.
11. In late December 2018, I got onto the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQSC) and told them about Sue's situation. At that stage nobody at [Provider UK] would respond to our phone calls or emails. Early in the New Year, somebody from ACQSC told me that they had got hold of [Provider UK] and said that they were going to do the safety check. On around 12 January 2019, [Provider UK] called to say they were ready to reinstate services. They asked if Sue could meet them in [redacted].
12. I was surprised that they were suddenly ready to restart the services because they hadn't done the safety inspection. This was after telling me that there was no way they could reinstate services without it. I know they didn't do the inspection because the dirt road is behind a locked gate and they had handed back their key when they withdrew services. It seemed to me they suddenly changed their mind because somebody at ACQSC had got onto them. As far as we are aware, no risk assessment was done regarding the road.

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- 13. On 16 January 2019 our co-ordinator from **Provider UK** came to visit Sue to because Sue had refused to go into [REDACTED]. The co-ordinator came to explain the services for Level Four package. The co-ordinator drove on the same dirt road in a small two wheel-drive car that had apparently been a 'risk' to personnel. I asked her if she had trouble with the road and she begrudgingly said 'No, I didn't'. Sue and I once again asked for more help in hours as Sue was not coping very well. At this time she picked up her bag and as she walked out of the door she said 'if you are not happy go to another provider'. The incident with the dirt road and the general attitude of **Provider UK** telling us to find another provider made me feel like they were trying to get us off the books.
- 14. On 17 January 2019, Sue had her last visit from **Provider UK**. A new carer came this time. He was a male and was described to us as a competent 4WD driver. **Provider UK** [REDACTED] told me that this male carer would be part of Sue's team from now on so that he could do the driving. This arrangement suited Sue, as the other carer was always a female. We thought that this would be the end of the saga.
- 15. At around end of January, we got the bill for January 2019. I saw that they had charged an additional \$216.49 to cover the cost of the new male driver. This was the first time in two years that we were charged for 'travel' costs. I spoke to our neighbour who also lives on a dirt road about 1 km from our property. She told me that **Provider UK** were seeing her on the same days as Sue but she was not getting charged any additional travel costs.
- 16. We live in a small community so people around here know each other. I know that there is an **Provider UK** employee who lives just down the road from us, who has serviced us in the past. I also know that she, like everybody else around these parts, knows how to safely drive a 4WD on a dirt road. It's baffling to me that **Provider UK** thought that the best solution they could offer is to send a new employee at an additional cost to us when there is somebody around the corner who could safely do the same job.

Continued issues with Provider UK

- 17. When we first set up services with **Provider UK** they asked if we had a gun on the property. I said yes, and that it is secured as per the law. We think having a gun on a property is a necessity to protect our livestock from wildlife. On 17 January 2019, there was a fox problem at the property. I had the gun out of the safe that morning in order to try and shoot the fox, but I wasn't successful. I had left it unloaded behind a door so that I could try again later that day as it takes time to get the gun safe keys and remove a gun that is needed. The carers from **Provider UK** came that day. They did not mention the gun to either Sue or myself. The staff left our house and reported the firearm to the police. The police cleared us from further investigation. However, later that day, we received an email from **Provider UK** saying that Sue's services are immediately suspended due to our 'bad road and gun'.
- 18. This left Sue without the help she needed for months. While the services were suspended, we were charged for three visits in February and three visits in March. None of these visits ever happened. I kept emailing and calling **Provider UK** initially to try and get the help Sue needed and then eventually to try to get a refund. I would always

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get the receptionist who would say our co-ordinator was out and would call back, and they never did.

19. We were lucky enough to pick up the additional charges for the visits in February and March. Some people wouldn't know to check. We had to go back and forward with **Provider UK** to even get a copy of our statements. When we asked for statements that we'd never received, they said that they can't reproduce the statements so they couldn't help. I couldn't understand why things were always so difficult when dealing with them.
20. I went back to the ACQSC to complain about the additional charges. We were talking to someone from the Commission and she was the go-between between us and **Provider UK**. She told me that she was having the same problems as we were having when trying to contact **Provider UK**. They apparently told her that they wouldn't reprint statements. After what I am told by the Commission staff member was a lot of haggling by ACQSC, she eventually got a copy of a spreadsheet and that showed that it was credited back onto Sue's package. We should have got a final statement in April 2019 when Sue's services were suspended, however we never saw a statement with the credit recorded. As far as we knew that credit was never explained to us. **Provider UK** never bothered to tell us that they had refunded the overcharge, let alone explain why it had happened in the first place.
21. In around March 2019, we got an email from **Provider UK** saying that they were cancelling Sue's services and that we needed to find another provider. Sue and I called our neighbour to see how her services were going. She told us that her services were cancelled just after Sue's were and that she was told by **Provider UK** that 'she is too far out' even though her property was not on the dirt road.
22. I was really angry that a provider could just drop Sue and our neighbour without any consideration about how they were going to get the care they needed.

Finding a new provider

23. Immediately after **Provider UK** cancelled our services, Sue and I started the search for a new service provider. We are limited by which providers come into our area. Sue did a lot of research on the internet and found **Provider UL**. They have a different model to other places. They let the care recipient find their own carers and then **Provider UL** arranges the payment. We signed up in March 2019, the day after our services were cancelled by **Provider UK**. At first we couldn't find any workers, but then Sue put out a Facebook ad and got heaps of applicants. The carer that comes now travels about 60 km and she is great. Everything is better with this new provider. They are responsive to our calls and emails, they make us feel like valued customers and they are actually interested in getting Sue the help she needs.
24. As an example, because we're on a large property, Sue uses the ride on lawn mower as her legs to get around. In around January or February 2019 the mower broke down. When she started with the new provider, Sue asked the new provider if she could get a

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new mower to help with her mobility and they told her 'no problem'. Within a week on 20 March 2019, we had a new one and Sue was able to move around again.

- 25. We don't want this to happen to anyone else. We are astute at noticing things like excess charges on statements, but there are a lot of old people out there that aren't picking up problems. Service providers are getting away with this. We get so angry with it all, and we wanted something done about it. It's not right.


Signed:

 P.A. Dunlop

Date:

16/10/19 19-10-2019

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Date:
