

Sample of Submission Letter

COTA Victoria would like to thank the person who provided this example. All efforts have been made by COTA Victoria to protect the author's identity and personal information.

TO WHOM it MAY CONCERN: My husband passed away nearly 5 years ago after us both and our family dealing with my husband having Alzheimer's Disease.

1 From the time of his diagnosis, I was on a steep learning curve finding out from where I could obtain assistance to care for him at home.

I managed to get support with him attending Day Care a few days at a Villa Maria venue and me joining a Carers' Group attached to that same organization in Wantirna.

2 As my husband's disease progressed to a serious level where his behaviour became too difficult, I found out I had bowel cancer. We had trouble finding a nursing home to take him before I went into hospital and we were forced to admit him to a nursing home in the Geelong area. We live in Wantirna. We later found a place in Croydon and he was moved by ambulance.

3 I had the bowel operation resulting in me having to use a stoma bag. Whilst I was in hospital, the Croydon Nursing home found they could not handle my husband as he was wandering into other people's rooms. The Croydon nursing home sent my husband to Peter James for reassessment. My three adult children were very upset at the condition they found their father in when they visited. He was taken off all medication and he was extremely scared not understanding where he was or what was happening to him. They found that trying to find out information about his condition from a doctor was extremely difficult. My children then arranged for their father to be moved to a great family owned nursing home on Boronia. There were two trained nurses in charge and one trained nurse to deal with medications.

I found the staff there to be very conscientious and empathetic but run off their feet. The nurse in charge was very selective with her choice of staff and was 'hands on' and respected the patients and families. This situation has now changed as the nursing home was sold to a big organisation who greatly lack the personal touch.

4 Staff and authorities have to be educated to understand the aspects of diseases like Alzheimer's and strokes. These patients cannot be hurried when they are showering, dressing and eating meals.

Many a time when I was feeding my husband I saw patients, who could not feed themselves, waiting for ages to be fed. Incontinent people should be carefully monitored so they are not lying in their own waste products.

I believe there should be nominated numbers of staff set by authorities for nursing homes. One trained nurse on duty is obviously insufficient.

5 There should be more carers in nursing homes, their training should be closely supervised by authorities and they should be able to speak the language of patients who reside there.

6 More appropriate wages should be paid to nurses and carers to attract suitable applicants. I have no proof, but from observation I fear that carers and nurses from overseas are used as they do not understand our wages system here and as a result are paid less. This is not acceptable.

7 I believe nursing homes and hospitals should not be owned by private businesses who expect to make a profit. Health of people should not be a money making industry.

8 The costs of entering a nursing home has got out of hand with ones I am aware of, charging around one million dollars bond. The ones I mention are owned by profit making companies whose base is not in Australia. Old Age should not be a money making concern.

9 Attention also needs to be paid to staffing at weekends. I visit a lady who is happy in her nursing home during the week but at weekend finds it very difficult to get assistance when apparently staff numbers are lessened because of the extra wages needing to be paid. Nursing an aged or inform person is a 24/7 job, not Monday to Friday. This is what undoes many people who try to care for family at home. The amount of people who have contracted cancer whilst caring for a loved one is staggering in my experience.

10 I found dealing with the requests of Centrelink was very difficult and in the end I employed a professional person who has set up a business to help people. It should not be accepted that all the population is computer savvy. Most of my friends and acquaintances do not use computers. Authorities should realize that the next generation will be computer literate but many, including new migrants, are not.

I hope that my experiences and thoughts will help illustrate the needs of people so that a better system can be established.

Best wishes to those trying to improve our system,
(Author's name retained)