



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Select Committee on Social Policy

Submission cover sheet

Inquiry into Petition 017-25 and E-Petition 005-25: Closure of Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre in Rivett

Submission number: 05

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The Secretary,
Standing Committee on Social Policy
ACT Legislative Assembly

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3 May 2025

Submission On the Closure of Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre in Rivett

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to comment on the proposed closure of the Burrangiri Aged Care Respite Centre in Rivett. Personally, the Centre should not be closed until there is a similar facility available in the ACT for both daily respite and overnight short-term respite care

I would like to provide some background on Margaret and myself and say why I think that this closure is premature.

Our Experience:

My wife Margaret and I were living in the United States while I worked there and she was diagnosed with slight memory loss in 2002. We came back to Australia at the end of my time there and went onto Beijing in 2005 before returning in 2008 when I retired to become a full time Carer for Margaret.

In essence, I have been a Carer for Margaret for around 23 years.

We have been fortunate that the impact of dementia has been slow over time and we were able to travel while I could take care of Margaret. In 2014 Margaret was registered for MyAgedCare and we began getting assistance under the Commonwealth Home Support Scheme. By 2017 Margaret became the holder of a Level 4 MyAgedCare package.

The package provides us with 18.5 hours a week at the moment which includes our payment of at least \$1,000 per month to cover the gap in what the package provides which is only some 14 to 15 hours per week and the 18.5 that we have now.

Many will say well you have the top package – that is true, but it is currently 18.5 hours a week while the week has 168 hours. This means that the package covers just 11% of the week which includes our additional expenditure on hours.

To only take the hours that the package provides would mean it covers less than 9% of a week.

To the Now:

Unfortunately, Margaret had a fall at Christmas which has impacted on her abilities and she can really not travel too much so she is home based and is reliant on me and the Carers to take her out to keep her in the Community.

Burrangiri has brought relief to me by allowing Margaret to go to Short Term Overnight Respite which allows me to have a break. The closure of this facility will make life much more difficult for me.

Short Term Overnight Respite:

Short term Respite in the ACT is in short supply as it is and some of the beds that were in other providers facilities are no different to Burrangiri with the bathroom and shower down the Hall.

Burrangiri is a critical asset for the Carers who are caring for a loved one at home. Let me explain.

I have spoken to a few providers of Respite including Warrigal who have only one bed available in their three facilities in Canberra at Stirling, Hughes and Calwell and this bed will become long term in August. The last time I checked with Mirinjani it had one short term respite bed. LDK once had short term respite when we used this in 2020 when I had a hip replacement but have since said that they don't take short term respite clients anymore as it was costing them money.

Contacting other Residential Aged Care providers elicits a similar response. Goodwin, which has three facilities in Canberra at Ainslie, Farrer and Monash ceased any scheduled short term respite in mid 2024.

Baptist Care at Griffith and Red Hill does have some respite beds but my understanding is that these are mainly used by patients leaving Hospital and having a recovery period before going back home.

Effectively, we have the major Residential Aged Care providers in the ACT no longer offering short term overnight Respite to those caring for a loved one at home

Now we are facing having a precious 15 bed short term overnight respite facility closing next month and short term overnight respite beds will be like hens teeth – very hard if not impossible to find.

The Outcome:

The outcome is likely to be burn out for the Carers without an ability to get any real relief. There have been individual stories being made publicly of

how Burrangiri has helped various families to continue to care for their loved ones but also getting a break from time to time.

This will also impact on Carers families. Take our case – fairly extreme I know but our daughter and her family [two grandchildren] live in Beijing and our son and his family [two more grandchildren] live in Liverpool in the UK. With Margaret really not able to travel to both of these locations I find it necessary to be able to place Margaret in Short term overnight respite so that I can visit both of our children and their families in keeping our family together.

Indeed, I am visiting our daughter in Beijing later this month as I have been able to place Margaret in Burrangiri while I go for two weeks. However, after this my chances of visiting our family will diminish sharply if this decision goes ahead.

Just substitute Beijing and Liverpool with Perth or Darwin or Adelaide or Cairns and see what impact the closure of Burrangiri will bring to families.

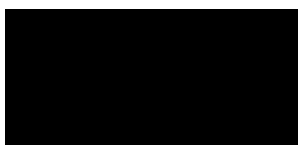
I am told that there are some 50,000 carers providing care for people in their family. This closure will likely increase the burden on our Public Hospital system for both the Carer and the person being cared for.

For the ACT Government to simply taking away this treasured facility from Carers without an alternative is really short term vandalism being imposed on the ACT Caring community. There are really no alternatives as I have outlined above.

I did ask one Care Provider what the cost would be for that Provider providing 24 hour care at home for a week. Around \$10,000 was their answer. This is not surprising as the cost of a Carer for 24 hours for a person with our care Company Kincare is currently between \$1042.30 and \$1836.50 per day. Hardly an alternative for many people. I have attached their current pricing schedule for your information.

In conclusion I would simply ask that Burrangiri not close until a facility is available to provide the same services as the Centre is presently providing for Day and overnight short-term respite.

Thank You



Tom Anderson