

INQUIRY INTO ELDER ABUSE IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 14/11/2015

Partially Confidential

Attention The Honourable Greg Donnelly MLC and committee members appointed to the task of examining the prevalence of elder abuse in NSW.

Introduction

It is with sadness and frustration that I recount my experience I have had, within my family, of elder abuse of my paternal grandmother. This abuse was both financial and emotional in nature. I hope by providing this information it can assist the inquiry committee in making necessary changes to safeguard the elderly in all aspects of their life.

My name is _____ and my Father, _____, left my mother and the family home in _____ in 2007 to go and live with his mother in _____, Sydney. My grandmother owned this home and at the time of my father choosing to reside with her, the home was valued at close to \$1 000 000. _____ is the only child of _____ and _____ husband, _____, died approximately 5 years prior to this.

Abuse

Immediately after _____ death my father advised my grandmother that it was necessary for her to have him “look after her finances” and he arranged for her to see a solicitor to have assigned a power of attorney order, with him being the executor of this order.

My father commenced taking overseas holidays approximately 12 months after he started living with his mother even though he was only receiving a carer’s pension. Suspicions were raised as to how he was affording these global trips extending to Europe, United States, Antarctica and New Zealand (as noted in my accompanying documents).

I continued having some contact with my Father and he often spoke of the overseas trips he had been enjoying. Nothing was mentioned about the means by which he could financially undertake these trips until he spoke to me after a visit to _____ on _____ 2011. He stated on this occasion that he had taken out a reverse mortgage on his mother’s property in _____. He also commented that he couldn’t wait for her to die before getting his inheritance, as he may be too old to travel by then. My Grandmother was 98 years old at this point. I was left wondering how my Father was able to access funds via a reverse mortgage on a home not owned by him.

Shortly after my Father’s visit to _____ he left for another overseas holiday. He called me prior to the trip to inform me that my Grandmother’s funeral arrangements had been made and a copy of this was in the mail. He also mentioned should anything happen to her whilst he was away that he didn’t want to be contacted. Whilst he was away I phoned my Grandmother to check on her health and she was noticeably lonely and concerned at the amount of trips my Father was taking. She mentioned that she didn’t know how he was affording to go away so much and that “I hope he hasn’t done anything with my home”. I became aware at this point that she didn’t know or hadn’t understood the implications of the reverse mortgage, approved with _____, I later found out that he had her sign this in December 2007. My advice to my Grandmother was for her to discuss this with my Father as soon as possible on his return.

My Grandmother was appreciative of my Father’s company even though she was financially and emotionally abused by her dependence on him.

The extent of the emotional abuse became apparent on one particular visit my husband and I had with my Father and Grandmother at the _____ RSL Club where he publicly shamed her calling her

stupid and asking how we could manage living with someone like her. As he went to purchase a drink she said to me "I didn't ask him to come and live with me".

My Brother, Mother and I were increasingly concerned with [redacted] financial and emotional well-being and decided to phone her neighbours to get their opinion on [redacted] health. To our horror we discovered that she constantly seeks out their help around late afternoon, often crying, and usually after they have heard my Father yelling at my Grandmother. They too expressed concern at the amount of alcohol he consumes but were too intimidated by him to approach him on the subject and tried their best just to support my Grandmother. They too are quite elderly. My Father has always drunk alcohol to excess and is known to be extremely alcohol affected by late afternoon on most days.

Police notified (some remaining correspondence with Police is attached)

We were extremely fearful for my Grandmother's welfare and my brother decided to contact the [redacted] Police to ask for them to assess the situation. He noted that they should visit the home at [redacted] in the late afternoon. Unfortunately they visited the neighbours and my Grandmother early one day and found everything to be in order.

Grandmother placed in nursing home

My Father placed my Grandmother into a nursing home in [redacted] 2013 stating that he could no longer care for her. My Mother and I visited her at [redacted] Nursing Home, approximately 2 weeks after she had been placed into care. My Father had left her and gone on yet another trip, this time on the [redacted] to "get over" the traumatic events he had just been through. My Grandmother was unrecognisable and dishevelled. She was sitting watching [redacted] Road with her bag packed and told us that [redacted] was picking her up soon and that he was only going on a holiday and would take her back home again. My Father told me that he had to tell her it was temporary as this was the only means of getting her to go to the home without her causing a fuss.

My Mother and I visited [redacted] neighbours after we visited [redacted]. They were understandably upset with the events of the past years and at losing their neighbour and friend of some 50 years. To my distress both neighbours recounted the emotional abuse they had heard and witnessed. One such episode occurred late one summer night when the windows of both homes were open and my Father's yelling could be heard quite plainly to say to my Grandmother "What have you done now? Why are you still alive? You should be dead."

Although my Mother and I were distressed to see [redacted] in such poor emotional health we were relieved that she would no longer be subjected to my Father's emotional abuse.

NSW Guardianship Tribunal Application submitted (Documents attached)

On returning from Sydney a search revealed the extent of the reverse mortgage as \$198 000.00. Along with my Mother we proceeded to take action to secure my Grandmother financially and made application to the NSW Guardianship Tribunal. This process was initiated by my family in an attempt to have my Grandmother's finances audited by an independent authority.

We were very disappointed that our case to have her finances monitored independently were rejected. Please note I have attached documents which were submitted to the NSW guardianship tribunal

It seems in my Grandmother's case she was abused and deceived by the person who should have had her best interests at heart. She is still alive at years old living at Nursing Home, and my Father is still residing in her home at .

Recommendations

More should be done to put in place independent representation for the aged when signing legal documents. Particularly in the case where the beneficiaries of the elder's assets are sole children with no accountability to others. I believe the solicitor in this case, did not ensure fully understood the documents she signed as indicated when queried me as to how her son was attaining the funds to travel.

Mental and emotional health of the elders in our society has to be placed of high importance and better screening needs to take place, independent of parties that stand to benefit from the outcome.

I applaud the initiative taken by the State Government in having an inquiry into the many important issues facing our extremely vulnerable elders in our society. I ask that the committee please keep me updated on the findings of this inquiry. Please contact me if I can be of any further assistance.