

[Newsletters](#)

[News](#)

- [Local News](#)
- [Court and Crime](#)
- [Property](#)
- [Politics](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Investigations](#)
- [National](#)
- [World](#)

[Sport](#)

- [Local Sport](#)
- [National Sport](#)
- [Dragons Den](#)
- [Hawks Nest](#)
- [Soccer](#)
- [Junior Sport](#)
- [Cricket](#)
- [AFL](#)

[What's On](#)

- [Things to do](#)
- [Food and Drink](#)
- [Theatre and Arts](#)
- [Family and Kids](#)
- [Music and Gigs](#)
- [TV Guide](#)

[Community](#)

- [Your News](#)
- [Babies, Weddings & Obituaries](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [History](#)
- [Competitions](#)
- [Send us your news](#)
- [Sponsorships](#)
- [Preventing suicide: A community toolkit](#)

[Comment](#)

- [Your Say](#)
- [Our Say](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Editorial](#)

[Life & Style](#)

- [Life](#)
- [Money](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Celebrity](#)
- [Shopping](#)
- [Horoscopes](#)
- [Puzzles](#)

[Classifieds](#)

- [Tributes](#)
- [Celebrations](#)
- [Jobs](#)
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- [Place a Classifieds Ad](#)
- [Ag and Rural](#)

[Recommended](#)

- [Sponsored Content](#)
- [Facebook Annual Gift Guide](#)
- [Special Publications](#)
- [Advertising Features](#)

[Digital Print Edition](#)

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- [Home](#)
- [news](#)
- [Sport](#)
- [What's On](#)
- [Community](#)
- [Comment](#)
- [Life & Style](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Recommended](#)
- [Digital Print Edition](#)
- [All](#)

1. [Home](#)
2. [Newsletters](#)
3. [Editors Pick - List](#)

September 3 2018 - 8:00PM

Thirroul elder abuse allegations: what the neighbours heard



[Angela Thompson](#)

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A Thirroul neighbourhood has been rocked by the bashing assault of one of its most vulnerable, allegedly at the hand of a pixie-faced resident entrusted with the elderly woman's care.

Gladys Buchanan, 81, left her Station Street home in an ambulance late Friday night. Her next-door neighbour Stefanie Thelan watched her go with a heavy heart.

"I saw that she had bruises all on her face." Ms Thelan told the Mercury, on Monday.

Ms Buchanan's live-in carer and legal guardian Alicia Gawronski has been charged with assaulting her.

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 Stefanie Thelan saw her injured 81-year-old neighbour depart in an ambulance. Photo: Sylvia Liber

Police officers were called to a disturbance at the property and stayed to keep watch, Friday night. They allege they saw the 28-year-old physically and verbally assault her elderly charge.

Ms Thelan told the *Mercury* she heard an airhorn repeatedly blowing next door and Ms Gawronski's voice – "get up! Get up! Get up!" – soon before police arrived.

"[Ms Gawronski] was screaming at [Ms Buchanan], but when police were there her whole tone changed," she said.

"Then it was, 'it's OK Gladys, you've got to go with them'."

 Ms Buchanan's live-in carer and legal guardian Alicia Gawronski. Photo: Facebook

Ms Thelan said she had gotten to know Ms Gawronski, who who moved into the property several months ago, and in the past had expressed admiration for the role she had taken on in caring for Ms Buchanan, who is understood to have lived at the property for several years.

"I actually said to her, I take my hat off to you, because I wouldn't be able to look after an elderly woman with dementia. I thought she was a good person."

Another neighbour, Steve Leebold, whose call brought police to the property on Friday, said he heard disturbing noises coming from the property for many hours beforehand.

"You'd hear loud noises, then they'd go quiet, and you'd relax. Then – bang! It would be on again. It went on for the entire day," he said.

 Steve Leebold

"The volume she was screaming at this old woman at was loud enough to be heard through that brick wall over the top of the television while I was sitting here.

"It was making me feel a little sick to imagine that someone would scream at an old lady."

He paid tribute to the officers who responded on Friday.

"Fortunately, they did respond fairly quickly and they had the patience to wait outside and view what was going on inside."

Neighbours have told the *Mercury* Ms Gawronski took over as Ms Buchanan's carer earlier this year, after her previous carer – a man who was also not related to her – took ill and died.

Ms Gawronski posted a picture of herself and Ms Buchanan to Facebook on June 9, seeming to celebrate her newfound guardian status.

"Sweet dreams darling," she wrote. "I'm so grateful all that effort didn't go to waste as it does with so many others and that you got what you wanted and we could bring you home ... I love trying to make you happy sweetie xoxo friend carer and now legal guardian".

Police will allege they heard moaning, shouting and about 11 slapping noises coming from inside the home's bathroom when they arrived about 10.45pm Friday.

They allegedly saw Gawronski verbally abuse and punch Ms Buchanan in the leg, while she was walking her elderly charge from the bathroom into the lounge room.

They claim Gawronski then took Ms Buchanan's legs "out from underneath her" as she tried to regroup, causing her to fall onto her back.

When the victim said she was scared, Gawronski allegedly replied "yeah, you oughta be scared, especially where you're gonna go, the nurses will beat the f*ck out of you every day".

Police also allege they heard Gawronski say to Mrs Buchanan, "do it again, I dare ya".

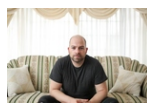
Ms Buchanan said, "I didn't do nothing", to which Gawronski allegedly replied, "you did, you slid your ass back on the seat, don't". The elderly woman continued to make a moaning noise, with Gawronski again telling her to "stop sliding her ass back", the court documents said.

Ms Buchanan was taken to Wollongong Hospital for treatment to numerous injuries and for alternative care to be arranged

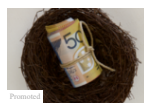
The health service would not respond to inquiries regarding her condition, citing patient privacy.

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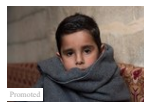
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