

NATIONAL WA AGED CARE ROYAL COMMISSION

Aged care boss denies 'culture of impunity' among staff after elder abuse revelation

By [Cameron Myles](#)

June 25, 2019 – 4.26pm



The chief executive of the company behind an aged care facility where a resident was violently abused by an employee has denied there are systemic issues or a “culture of impunity” among staff, despite nearly 300 reports being made to authorities over more than four years.



Hidden camera footage shows aged care staff member stuffing a napkin into the mouth and nose of aged care resident Clarence Hausler.

But Japara's Andrew Sudholz reiterated his apology to the family of Clarence Hausler, who was abused at Adelaide's Mitcham Residential Care Facility, and said he had let them down.

Mr Sudholz was called as a witness at the second day of the Perth hearings of the aged care royal commission on Tuesday, answering questions surrounding the case of Mr Hausler, who was bedridden and suffered dementia when he was abused by Corey Lucas in September 2015.

It was only when Mr Hausler's daughter Noreen hid a camera in her father's room that evidence of Lucas grabbing the older man's arms, holding a napkin over his

face and harshly twisting his nose was captured.

The video was given to police and Lucas was later jailed over the assault.

Ms Hausler gave evidence of her late father's treatment as a case study on Monday and said she believed management culture at the centre resulted in Mr Hausler's quality of life suffering. Outside court she called for CCTV to be installed in aged care facility rooms.

Senior counsel assisting the commission Peter Rozen QC quizzed Mr Sudholz on management's response to Ms Hausler's concerns about her father's treatment, as well as almost 300 reports Japara made to the Department of Health between September 2015 and May this year.

But Mr Sudholz said the 298 reports over 4½ years were "allegations of suspected abuse" and there had been fewer than 100 substantiated cases of assault, with Mr Hausler's case a criminal incident.

"Across the 49 facilities and around 4000 residents (under Japara), the allegations of abuse that is substantiated and dealt with is less than 100," he said.

"I don't think that is systemic."

Mr Sudholz said excluding Mr Hauser's experience, "the care in Mitcham is good and strong".

He denied Mr Rozen's suggestion there was a "culture of impunity", where "staff behave with the view they can get away with it".

Since the cases highlighted by the royal commission – including repeat incidents in Brighton's Elanora and Carrum Downs' Bayview aged care homes – Mr Sudholz said there had been a focus on training around elder abuse.

He said the company was about to run a pilot study offering CCTV in rooms if residents and family asked for it.

But so far take-up had been "very small"; only three residents in one facility.

"We are not standing still on this issue," Mr Sudholz said.

The royal commission will sit in Perth for the remainder of the week.



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