

NATIONAL WA AGED CARE ROYAL COMMISSION

Elder abuse caught on camera shows carer 'force-feeding' 89-year-old

By Angie Raphael

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A daughter suspicious about her elderly father's care installed a hidden camera in his bedroom and was shocked to discover he was violently abused by an employee at one of Australia's biggest aged care providers.

The confronting video showed Corey Lucas force-feeding 89-year-old Clarence Hausler, grabbing his arms and holding a napkin over his face while harshly twisting his nose.



Mr Hausler's daughter told the hearing her father had been vulnerable.

Noleen Hausler filmed the humiliating abuse of her dementia-affected and bedridden father in September 2015 at Mitcham Residential Care Facility in Adelaide, operated by Japara Healthcare.

She provided the footage to police and Lucas was later jailed over the aggravated assault.

Ms Hausler, who is a nurse, shared her late father's story as part of a case study at the aged care royal commission in Perth on Monday.

"Being confronted with the visual images, I went into a state of shock and total concern for Father," she said in her statement.

"My heart was racing (and) my hands were shaking."

Mr Hausler repeatedly cried as she gave evidence at the hearing about her father, who spent about 13 years at the 38-bed facility.

Over eight days, he was physically assaulted twice by Lucas and once by an agency employee.

"I had no idea that someone could possibly do that," Ms Hausler said.

"I felt for dad in the fact that I didn't protect him sufficiently."

Ms Hausler had complained to the facility but was accused of illegally spying on staff and breaching laws.

The commission is examining whether Japara prioritised its own corporate interests and reputation over person-centred care.

Ms Hausler said while some staff were dedicated and compassionate, Japara had a "profit-driven attitude".

"I believe that my father's quality of life suffered as a direct result of management's culture," she said.

"If a lesson can be learnt, it is that resident-centred care means everyone's voice must be heard and respected regardless of being verbal, non-verbal, advocated, evidenced or witnessed.

"I believe extremely vulnerable loved ones in care, who mirror my father's diminished capacity to speak or defend themselves, deserve additional protection in their private rooms."

Commissioner Richard Tracey thanked Ms Hausler for sharing her "terrible experiences" to assist the commission.

"It has certainly improved our understanding of some lack of care that occurs from time to time in this area of aged care," he said.

Outside, Ms Hausler told reporters having CCTV in rooms was a "no brainer" to ensure people were protected and said her father's case was not an isolated incident.

"(It's) very much a widespread problem in the sector for the fact that it happens all behind closed doors," she said.

"These are the most vulnerable people that it's been happening to - they can't speak, they can't raise the alarm."

The royal commission will sit in Perth for five days.

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