

Media release: for release 23.3.17

## FIGHTING THE SYSTEM: FOUR CORNERS

Monday 27<sup>TH</sup> March 2017

***Fighting the System: The mothers and carers battling for justice and protection for their disabled children.***

*"I brought him into this world, and I love him. I do all I can to help him. I'm 88 soon. I'm still battling." Jean, mother*

On Monday night *Four Corners* exposes what happens behind closed doors in some taxpayer funded group homes for the disabled and talks to the mothers and carers taking on the system.

*"It's about time for me to tell this." Maria, mother*

These are families who've made the tough decision to place their disabled children into care, in the belief it would be the safest place for them. They say their trust has been betrayed.

*"I could not sleep knowing my son was in that house... I would park my car at the front of that house ... so that if he did need something I'd be there, but the reality is, I couldn't protect him at that point. I had to get him out." Anne, mother*

This *Four Corners* investigation shines a light on the mistreatment of these vulnerable people.

*"No child deserves to be treated as a dollar figure rather than a human being. They have rights. They deserve respect. We're entrusted to do what's right for them. We're entrusted to advocate for them, and we failed." Disability worker*

These are homes where sexual and physical abuse occurs and perpetrators get away with it, because police and the justice system are unable to cope with the challenges of dealing with witnesses with disabilities.

*"The investigating officer said well, 'We dropped the ball'. I just said, 'You think?' They just gave up and said 'We did. We didn't do it properly,' and that was it." Bev, carer*

One industry watchdog expresses his frustration over the failure of the group home operators to end the mistreatment:

*"I could give a lengthy explanation but let me put it simply. The practice was unacceptable." Disability Ombudsman*

And despite the billions promised for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and plans for new protections, some warn that families need to stay vigilant.

*"Parents should not be trusting service providers and they must do due diligence all the time, because the evidence is that it's very unsafe and there's a lot of risk." Disability Advocate*

The mothers and carers who've seen their children come to harm are determined to speak out and demand action.

*"I'm a fighter. I don't give up." Jean*

**Fighting the System, reported by Linton Besser and presented by Sarah Ferguson, goes to air on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March at 8.30pm EDT. It is replayed on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> March at 10.00am and Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> at 11pm. It can also be seen on ABC News 24 on Saturday at 8.00pm AEST, [ABC iview](#) and at [abc.net.au/4corners](http://abc.net.au/4corners).**

**ENDS**

For more information or images, please contact Acting News Publicist Safia van der Zwan on [vanderzwan.safia@abc.net.au](mailto:vanderzwan.safia@abc.net.au) or 02 8333 3846.