

# Frail, tearful and 111 years old, Myra is forced to move home That's no way to treat a lady

CARLY CRAWFORD

A HEARTBROKEN Myra Nicholson, Australia's oldest person, farewelled her nursing home in tears this week.

The 111-year-old woman known affectionately as "Nicky" was wheeled from the Blackburn Aged Care Facility on Friday as staff and other residents broke down around her.

"I don't feel too good," she said over her last cup of tea at her home of eight years.

"I will miss everyone." Mrs Nicholson has moved to the nearby Coronella Retirement Village.

The Nunawading retirement village offered her a room after news that the care facility will close at the end of this month after the last of its eight remaining residents are relocated.

The closure stems from a bitter dispute between landlord Paul Devlet and the care providers, Sue and Graham Dart, who lease the building.

The Darts' lease expires in September.

Tearful staff have begun seeking new work, saying they would prefer to work with the existing carers.

"We're like a family and this is awful for everyone," said manager Avril Walter.

Residents continue to leave due to their uncertain future.

Shadow aged care minister Jan McLucas said the Government had known about the dispute since February, but had done nothing.

She said a loophole in the Aged Care Act meant the department could not intervene in private business dealings.

"A failing in the Act has rendered the department useless," she said.

"I know they've had these problems before, but this minister and previous ministers have done nothing about it."

Aged Care Minister



Forced out: Myra Nicholson, 111, leaves the Blackburn Aged Care Facility and (left) is farewelled by a remaining resident.

Picture: ROB LEESON

Santo Santoro described the decision to shut the facility before September as "disappointing".

"The department is closely monitoring the transfers and has assured me it will take every possible action to

safeguard the care and comfort of residents," he said.

The landlord cannot run the facility unless the Department of Health and Ageing grants him the required status.

A woman who identi-

fied herself as Mr Devlet's wife when contacted by the *Sunday Herald Sun* said: "I don't want to talk to you, but we are willing to sue you."

Mr Devlet's solicitor did not return our calls.



Fertility: Patricia Rashbrook and husband.

## Age no bar as mums deliver

NEW life has arrived at the top and bottom of the world and at age extremities.

At 63, child psychiatrist Patricia Rashbrook yesterday became Britain's oldest "new mum".

And, earlier this week, a girl, 9, from the Apurina tribe in Brazil's Amazon rainforest gave birth.

With fertility treatment, Ms Rashbrook gave birth by caesarean section to a 3kg son, JJ.

She is three years younger than Romanian Adriana Iliescu who had a daughter last year.

Ms Rashbrook, who has two adult children, had IVF in an undisclosed European country with the help of controversial Italian embryologist Severino Antinori.

British IVF regulatory body, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, said in a statement age was no barrier to fertility treatment.

Doctors decided on IVF assistance based on the welfare of the child and considering its parents' health, age and ability to look after its needs.

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## New hope for Herceptin

THE Federal Government is set to subsidise breast cancer drug Herceptin.

The breakthrough would mean thousands of early stage HER2 breast cancer sufferers would no longer have to find \$70,000 a year for the drug. But still one in four sufferers would miss out on the subsidies.

A meeting of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, called to decide if Herceptin should be listed on the Pharma-

SUELLEN HINDE and LINCOLN WRIGHT

ceutical Benefits Scheme, concluded yesterday. Committee chair Lloyd Sansom would not reveal any decision, saying it would be relayed directly to Health Minister Tony Abbott.

But a government source said the committee was likely to back the anti-cancer drug for listing in line with the Therapeutic Goods Administration's conditions.

And the source yesterday said it was likely Cabinet would approve Herceptin listing, based on a positive recommendation from the committee. Breast Cancer Network Australia policy manager Terri Smith said they were "99 per cent positive" the listing would go ahead. The TGA has recommended Herceptin for early stage breast cancer in women with either a primary tumour greater than 20mm in size or with lymph node involvement.