



## Media Release

### **SUBURBAN AND REGIONAL EDITORS NB: REGIONAL REPORTS ARE AVAILABLE**

**Thursday, 16 September, 2010**

### **ACCOMMODATION, ACCOMMODATION, ACCOMMODATION**

The lack of stable, affordable and supported long-term accommodation has again been identified as a key finding in this year's Community Visitors annual report, tabled in the Victorian State Parliament today.

Issues with accommodation were identified by 68 Community Visitors who visit 127 mental health facilities once a month, including hospital emergency departments, throughout the state. Accommodation issues were reported in five of the nine regions throughout the state including three metropolitan regions: Eastern, Northern and Southern - as well as Hume and Loddon-Mallee in regional Victoria.

Consumers have been on waiting lists for suitable accommodation to become available before they can be discharged. Consumers have experienced additional delays in discharge due to the lack of availability of beds for longer-term treatment (known as 'secure extended care unit' or SECU).

Ms Pearce said that people recovering from mental health issues have been discharged to pension-only supported residential services (SRS), which are often unable to provide the necessary care for people with complex needs.

As well, there continues to be a number of long-stay patients in treatment facilities who have been waiting for alternative accommodation for many years.

"These individuals remain in highly restrictive treatment facilities due to a lack of discharge options," Ms Pearce said.

"In the 2009-10 state budget, the government funded 50 intensive psychosocial rehabilitation support packages, some of which are targeted at long-stay patients in secure extended care."

'However, the Community Visitors Mental Health Board is concerned about the slow pace of the implementation of the SECU transition project as, to date, only six SECU patients with dual disabilities have been offered places in the promised purpose-built accommodation.

"We call on the Government to continue to demonstrate a commitment to funding intensive support packages targeting people being treated in SECU settings who could live in the community."



“We also call for an expansion of the Multiple and Complex Needs program which facilitates improved access to intensive support for persons who require complex case management.”

The Public Advocate urges Government to further develop collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders in the public and private sector to ensure systemic barriers do not prevent mental health consumers from accessing appropriate services, which may contribute to delays in their recovery.

People who experience a mental illness are at a greater risk of homelessness. Provision of quality, permanent supportive housing is critical to improving the health and wellbeing of people with a mental illness. Further investment to increase the supply of more permanent housing and coordinated support such as the Elizabeth Street Melbourne facility is crucial for people with mental health issues who require access to safe housing and are linked into community care.

Community Visitors are empowered under legislation to monitor the care and treatment of consumers in mental health facilities providing 24-hour nursing care. They report annually to the Community Services, Mental Health Minister, Lisa Neville, on the findings from their mandated visits.

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