



MEDIA RELEASE

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Help vulnerable in pension-level SRSs

Community Visitors Annual Report 2009 tabled in Parliament today calls on the State Government to help residents of Supported Residential Services (SRSs) who have complex health or problematic behaviour, and may be managing a mental illness.

In its report based on 1136 visits to 187 SRSs, the Community Visitors Health Services Board said that such residents can be moved from one SRS to another placing them at risk of homelessness and that proprietors needed more help to look after them.

Board chair, Public Advocate Colleen Pearce, said SRSs were never established to provide accommodation for vulnerable Victorians with multiple and complex needs.

Accordingly, current regulations only require one member of staff to have a Certificate III in Community Services or equivalent, with a staffing ratio of 1:30, which fails to meet the needs of these residents.

While acknowledging the positive impact of \$40.5 million over five years for SRSs to improve resident social participation and access to services and SRS viability, the report went on to say that:

“Community Visitors acknowledge that proprietors are not necessarily aware of the extent of the complex needs of these residents on admission.

“This can be due to incomplete or non-existent discharge paperwork from service providers.

“Where they do understand the person’s care needs, proprietors may admit the resident because they need to fill the bed.

“Residents displaying challenging behaviours, that staff are not able to manage due to lack of training or time, have impacted on their fellow residents.

“Community Visitors have reported instances of violence, towards staff and property that would have upset other residents.

“In some cases, these residents have been transferred to accommodation that is more suited to their needs.

“However, Community Visitors report that residents with complex and challenging behaviours are simply moved from one facility to another, where they fail to receive adequate support and their behaviour continues to impinge on the wellbeing of other residents.

“Community Visitors are very concerned about the lack of alternative housing and support options available to residents they see inadequately supported in SRSs.”

The Public Advocate also supported the Ombudsman’s recommendations relating to SRSs in his annual including a review of the Department of Human Services’ methods for conducting investigations of complaints and developing processes for tracking complaints about proprietors where they may have a number of facilities.

Community Visitors are volunteers supported by the Office of the Public Advocate. They are empowered by law to visit shared supported accommodation for people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities, Supported Residential Services (SRSs) and mental health facilities with 24-hour nursing care to ensure their rights are being met.

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