



# Office of the Public Advocate

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Thursday, 15 October 2009**

### **Lack of support for people with complex needs puts residents at risk**

The Community Visitors Annual Report 2009, tabled in Parliament today, calls on the State Government to address urgently the lack of support planning and appropriate accommodation for residents with complex needs.

Board chair Colleen Pearce said that this was the single most important issue arising from the reports of 2962 visits by Community Visitors to 1104 disability accommodation services in Victoria.

“Community Visitors reported consistently on situations where inadequate planning and support for people with complex care needs led to situations of violence in many homes across the state. In some instances, police attendance has been required or staff have been instructed to lock themselves in an office until the situation is brought under control.”

It can mean some residents have to live in their own homes in a state of anxiety and be subject to emotional and physical abuse,” Ms Pearce said. In many cases, people are living in fear of constant abuse and actual violence, their distress exacerbated by the reality that there is, very often, no immediate resolution available.

“Community Visitors believe these problems are growing due to the continued shortage of permanent places in disability accommodation. This is leading to the inappropriate placements of many people with complex needs and behaviours.

Community Visitors understand that while some people have been made victims of violence, the person instigating it frequently does not have the proper supports in place to help them manage their behaviour. They report instances where residents with high care needs are subject to unauthorised restrictive interventions without proper assessment of their needs or required behaviour support planning in place.

“Community Visitors find it is not uncommon for a group of people to have their lives completely disrupted by the introduction of a new resident and for staff to be confronted with huge challenges in the ability to manage appropriately.”

“There continues to be a great need for more well-staffed houses for this significant group of people.”

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.

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES: Sally Gibson, Communications Coordinator, on 0409 197 717 (mobile)**