



Media Release

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SRS not geared for people with complex needs - Community Visitors

Private care homes (Supported Residential Services) do not have the staff or qualifications to provide care for people with a disability and/or a mental illness with complex needs, according to the Community Visitors Annual Report tabled in State Parliament today.

The issue was highlighted in the annual report for the Health Services stream of the volunteer program of the Office of the Public Advocate and has been raised in annual reports over **many years**.

Public Advocate, Colleen Pearce, who chairs the Community Visitor (Health Services) Board, said that SRS were simply not designed to provide housing and support for people with a disability with complex needs; they were originally developed for the frail aged who did not need nursing home care.

“We are trying to retrofit a care solution which was never designed for the purpose; people with a disability and/or mental illness are being inappropriately referred to SRS,” Ms Pearce said. [p.17]

“This is a very serious human rights issue right in the midst of the most liveable city in the world.”

“Private proprietors who own SRS come from a myriad of backgrounds, and are not necessarily trained in the needs of people with a disability and/or mental illness.

“Only one staff member has to have a qualification; it is the base qualification of Personal Care Assistant; and, as well, staffing ratios of 1:30 are simply inadequate for this group of people.”

“Most people with a disability and/or mental illness who find themselves in SRS, particularly those which only cost the price of a pension, are being woefully served by the Victorian community.

“The State Government must find a suitable accommodation for these people who are being incompatibly housed with the frail aged.

“The circumstances of this model of care are making residents with a disability and/or a mental illness very vulnerable,” Ms Pearce said. “The private market nature of SRS means that they and their clients become susceptible to market forces.” [See case study page 18].

Community Visitors (Health Services) are empowered by law to visit residents in SRS to ensure their human rights are being met. During the year, 67 Community Visitors in the health services stream conducted 821 visits to 158 of the 179 SRS in the state.

A total of 323 Community Visitors were supported by OPA during 2010-11. The value of the work of all the Community Visitors has been estimated at \$3.6 million annually.

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