



Media Release

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Person-centred plans inadequate, false and thin on detail – if created at all, say Community Visitors

Planning for residents of disability and supported housing as well as for consumers in mental health units are inadequate, thin on detail, often do not involve the person in its preparation and sometimes are simply created by staff – if they are created at all.

This was a key finding by all Community Visitor areas ('streams') as outlined in this year's Community Visitors Annual Report tabled in State Parliament today.

Public Advocate, Colleen Pearce, who chairs the combined Community Visitor Stream Boards, said that the mantra of 'person-centred planning' in the system needed to be made real in the actual plans for people.

"Person-centred planning is the absolute corner-stone of proper care," Ms Pearce said.

"Community Visitors find that, if there are individual plans prepared for people, they have likely been created or led by staff, are incomplete, are very light on detail or don't reflect the person's own aspirations – if they are, in fact, created at all."

In one case, a resident with an intellectual disability and related behaviours of concern who had been living in a community residential unit was presented to a mental health unit. It caused him extensive distress and he was shackled and chemically restrained for at least eight hours. He was discharged three weeks later with no diagnosis of mental illness and sent to another home, potentially causing further instability in his life. [p.43]

A resident with a disability in another Community residential unit in the **Eastern Metropolitan Region** had to wait ten months for a custom-made wheelchair with attended impacts on his ability to be socially included. [p.83]

Very little opportunity is offered to those residents or clients who do not speak, to communicate independently, and therefore it is questionable to what extent they contribute to their own plans, or are enabled to express preferences or make real choices. In many instances, incompatible residents are placed together in the same house to suit the needs of the service provider, rather than the client.

For example, in another case, a young man with autism in the **Grampians Region** was extremely sensitive to noise but was moved to a house with residents who had behaviours of concern. This environment caused him great distress; he displayed threatening behaviours and caused property damage. [p.87]

In **Barwon-South West Region**, staff in an SRS, however, demonstrated thoughtful planning for one young woman with diabetes. They used phone texting to assist her to manage her insulin-dependency while she was out of the house enjoying social activities. [p.20]



Community Visitors are empowered by law to visit people with a disability and, or a mental illness in accommodation providing 24-hour support throughout the state.

During 2010-2011, a total of 323 Community Visitors across all streams of the program made 5069 visits across Victoria. The value of their volunteer effort has been estimated at \$3.6 m annually.

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