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Family and Community Development Committee
Parliament House,
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EAST MELBOURNE, Vic. 3002
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Inquiries into the Provision of Supported Accommodation for Victorians with a Disability or Mental Illness

The Victorian Disability Advisory Council (VDAC) is pleased to have the opportunity to contribute a submission to the above Inquiries. As articulated in the Victorian State Disability Plan, Priority Strategy 1: Reorient Disability Supports; people with a disability should be able to choose where they live, with whom and in what types of housing – just like most other members to the Victorian community.

About the Victorian Disability Advisory Council (VDAC)

The Victorian Disability Advisory Council (VDAC) is comprised of community leaders who are people with disabilities and parents of children and adults with disabilities. VDAC provides advice to the Minister for Community Services in respect of whole of government policies and strategies to increase the participation of people with a disability in the Victorian community. The Council also works with other local and national community and government advisory groups to develop and promote opportunities for all Victorians.

VDAC's provides advice to Government in order to promotes an accessible, economically and socially inclusive Victoria, which improves the lives of all people with disabilities and their families. Further information on the VDAC can be found at: www.officefordisability.vic.gov.au/disability_advisory_council.htm

VDAC would like to contribute the following comments for consideration regarding the inquiry's objective to improve the provision of care and accommodation for people with disabilities or mental illness in Victoria. In particular VDAC supports a model of independent living wherever feasible.

Integrated Living

The VDAC supports a model of housing and support for people with disabilities that promotes independent living for people with disabilities. Integrated living means that people with disabilities have a right to:

- Live with dignity in their chosen community.
- Participate in all aspects of community life.
- Control and make decisions about their own lives.

VDAC's focus on integrated living is underpinned by its commitment to a rights based approach, which is also articulated in the *Victorian Disability State Plan 2002-2012* as the guiding principle of dignity and self-determination (choice).

VDAC believes people with disabilities should be able to exercise the same level of choice and control as do other Victorians about where they live, with whom they live, how they spend their time at home and how and by whom any support that they may require is provided.

Currently, in existing supported accommodation facilities such as Community Residential Units (group homes) residents often do not have an opportunity to make these choices.

Individualised support packages

VDAC's approach to housing and support, which is underpinned by the principles of integrated living, leads us to support the increased provision of flexible individualised support packages that are tailored to meet the specific needs and preferences of people with disabilities, their families and carers.

The provision of individualised funding systems allows people to choose where, and how they wish to live, work and participate in the community.

Recent research based on housing and support models in Western Australia and the United Kingdom respectively has suggested that individualised support packages provide better social outcomes including increased community participation and more choice and control for individuals with disabilities and their families than more traditional supported accommodation models (Lord & Hutchinson 2003; Hurstfield, Parashar & Schofield 2007).

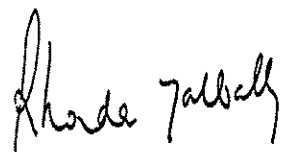
The VDAC is strongly supportive of the Victorian Government's current trial of the new funding model of support payment - one in rural and one in metropolitan Victoria - modelled on the UK experience. This would enable individuals with disabilities and their families to be paid some or all of their allocated funding for support directly. VDAC regards this as a very positive model as it is designed to enable individuals and their families to have more choice, control and independence in determining what support services they use, when they use them and how those services should be provided. More information on this project can be found at:

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/improving_supports/direct_payments_project

Flexible systems of support such as the direct payments model should be supported because such models would promote independent living for people with disabilities and could in the long term significantly reduce the demand on supported accommodation for people with disabilities.

If you have any queries about the VDAC position, please feel free to contact me.

Kind regards,



Dr Rhonda Galbally AO
Chair, Victorian Disability Advisory Council

References

Hurstfield, Jennifer, Urvashi Parashar, and Kerry Schofield. 2007. *The Costs and Benefits of Independent Living*. London: Office for Disability Issues.

Lord, John, and Peggy Hutchinson. 2003. "Individualised Support and Funding: building blocks for capacity building and inclusion." *Disability & Society* 18 (1):71-86.