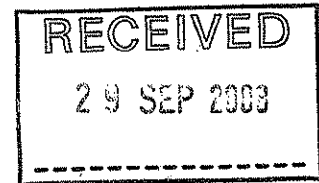


24/09/2008

Mrs J Burton  
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Committee secretariat  
Family and Community Development Committee  
Parliament House, Spring St,  
East Melbourne, VIC 3002

Re: Inquiry into Supported Accommodation for Victorians with a Disability or Mental Illness.

I wish to make a written submission as an individual about the subject of the above inquiry.

I am the primary carer of an adult with an Intellectual disability. I have recently turned 56 and am very concerned what the future holds for my daughter in regards to supported accommodation. I have not as yet had first hand experience in trying to get my daughter into supported accommodation, as quite frankly, it would be a waste of time. Will hopefully be able to still care for her at home for a few more years yet. But based on information from parents/carers that are in crisis, they are still told there is a four to five year waiting list. With this information at hand, it makes you wonder what will happen to these people. There is no information out there in regards to accessing supported accommodation in terms of information, planning and decision-making. I have attended several information nights regarding housing, but they have all been geared towards people that have a disability, but are relatively high functioning and with some support, can live independently.

According to recent documentation, which quoted 1,358 people with a disability are now on the waiting list for shared supported accommodation. Surely this figure is only for emergency. I was informed by Human Services Department some time back that there wasn't such a thing as a waiting List anymore. It would be interesting to find out exactly how many people will be requiring supported accommodation in the next ten years. I think it is disgraceful that there is such a shortage and it would appear that there has been no forward planning in the past.

Most people that attend an ATSS (Adult Training Support Service) from the age of 18, will most probably require supported accommodation within the next ten years, as like myself, their parents/carers would now be in their 50's, to 80's. I would like to see a survey sent to all parents/carers, that have a son/daughter receiving the disability support pension. This survey would indicate what needs to be planned for the future, in terms of individual needs and requirements.

Whilst it is good for carers to receive packages to enable them to keep their son/daughter home longer, it still does not solve the problem for when the time comes they are unable to keep them home. The future for everyone is uncertain, but more so when you have a child with a disability.

For us, each day is a constant worry about the future of our special child. We need clarification and confirmation that when the time comes, our child will be placed in the appropriate accommodation. Ideally, we would like this to happen before we get too old, to ensure they have settled into their new environment before we leave this planet.

As an individual I don't have the answers to all the questions. But the Government firstly should know the approximate number of people that will be requiring supported accommodation in the immediate future and years beyond (especially with Autism increasing).

I have attended numerous meetings/social events discussing this issue, and I speak for others and myself. Rather than CRU's, we feel it would be more economical to build places similar to "Retirement Villages". The Units could be categorised as "fully supported" – "semi supported". They could sleep up to 5 or 6, depending on their needs. Some Units could have a kitchen whereby clients who want to cook, can with some support. For the others, there could be a dining room for meals. Living in this environment would be beneficial for the clients, as they would have their friends around them. Families and friends could visit, and working Bees set up to maintain the grounds ect. This scenario would be geared mainly for Mild to Moderate Intellectually disabled.

To fund this, part of their pension would go towards the cost and perhaps an initial outlay to access the housing accommodation.

These places could be planned geographically in relation to existing and future ATSS'S. Staffing is another concern, there does seem to be a shortage in relation to this field. Obviously training is of the utmost importance and good incentives to keep good staff. would need to be instigated.

If supported accommodation premises aren't made available in the immediate future, more parents/carers will relinquish their child, because they are left with no other choices. This would be their last resort, and what a heartbreaking decision it would be. Please give us hope for the future.

Yours truly,



Mrs Julie Burton.