EMAIL COVER SHEET.

To: The Secretary,
Family and Community Development Committee
Parliament House,
Spring Street,
East Melbourne 3002

Please find enclosed the Kew Cottages Coalition Submission (4 files plus this cover sheet)

From: Don Anderson
19 Towers Street
Beaumaris 3193
Tel 95843675

Date: 10th October 2008

Subject: Inquiry into Accommodation for Victorians with a Disability or Mental Illness

Plus:

Attachments:


2. Letter from Mr. Bill Shorten MP, to Mr Don Anderson, KCC, 29-Sep 2008

3. Letter from the Hon Sherryl Garbutt, Victorian Minister for Community Services to Mr. Don Anderson, 24-Oct 2003
The Secretary,
Family and Community Development Committee
Parliament House,
Spring Street,
East Melbourne 3002

Dear Sir / Madam,

**Inquiry into Accommodation for Victorians with a Disability or Mental Illness**

The Kew Cottages Coalition advocates that the Victorian Government urgently review all its Disability Service Infrastructure Projects, commencing with it ‘flagship’ project at Kew Cottages.

The current economic crisis necessitates that the proposed review is undertaken immediately in order to properly protect the interests of all Victorians.

While the Kew Cottages Coalition is generally interested in the standard, range and adequacy of care and accommodation currently available for intellectually disabled and mentally ill people, we are particularly concerned that not enough is being done to provide both full time accommodation for those people who require it and also the families of these people, who in most cases desperately need to be relieved of the full time responsibility of caring for their family members or relatives. It must be said that in a large proportion of these cases the parents are elderly most in the 70 to 80 years and more bracket and not really able to provide the full time carer support required.

While we are aware of the many services currently funded by both the Common wealth and State Governments to relieve some of the caring strain on parents and relatives, we submit that in a large number of cases these services are either insufficient, inadequate or in some cases in rural areas non existent. We therefore wish to respond particularly to items 2,4,5,6 and 10 of the Inquiry’s terms of reference as follows:

**Item 2**
We understand there is a very large number of people mainly intellectually disabled, who are on a waiting list for full time accommodation. We believe this number is in excess of 4000 and growing steadily, and that of this number, over 1000 are on the urgent list and a large proportion have been on that list for some considerable time. While both Governments seem to have been aware of this position, very little appears to have been done to relieve the situation particularly as the Victorian Government appears to have been preoccupied over the last decade with closing down institutions. This action has only added to the problem. The building of the 73 new Community Residential Units at a cost of about $60m to rehouse the people moved out of the Kew Cottages diverted Government funds away from any accommodation program intended to reduce the urgent waiting list. We were told by
both the State Liberal and Labour Governments that the proceeds from the sale of the Kew Cottages land would be used for services to the disabled. It was assumed by many at the time, that all such proceeds would be allocated to improving and/or providing new services to the intellectually disabled. This assumption later proved to be incorrect as the term disabled was meant to cover all forms of disability which included the physically disabled, visually disabled and hearing impaired etc as well as the intellectually disabled. Please see copy of letter from Minister Garbutt enclosed. We considered this to be an unjustifiable and unfair allocation of the proceeds for two main reasons:

(a) The proceeds were to come from the sale of land specifically dedicated for the use and treatment of the intellectually disabled and
(b) The size and nature of the urgent waiting list for accommodation for these people demanded urgent Government action which to date has not been forthcoming.

Item 4

The apparent lack of interest by both Liberal and Labour governments in eliminating or even reducing the urgent waiting list continues to have a serious adverse impact on Victorian families who have been endeavouring to have their intellectually handicapped family member accommodated in suitable supported accommodation for some considerable time. It has in many cases been the main cause of marriage breakdowns and serious adverse effects on the health and wellbeing of both parents and some siblings. In the case of elderly parents acting as either part or full time carers, the position is really inexcusable in any modern, affluent and civilized society.

In this respect it seems incongruous that any government could allow buildings in good condition, purposely built for accommodation of the intellectually disabled to remain empty at the Kew Cottages site since Stage 1 of the KRS development program has been completed knowing that there are many Victorian families who have been waiting for many years for the opportunity to have their intellectually handicapped family member accommodated in any of those or any other suitable building. The Kew Cottages Coalition (KCC) recently presented a submission to the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on Public Land Development showing how some of the remaining buildings if not all of them could be used for respite care, medical and dental services for the intellectually disabled. Please see statement attached. We understand that Mr Bill Shorten Federal MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Childrens Services has written to Minister Madden supporting this proposal and is currently awaiting the Ministers reply.

Item 5

Until medical and/or psychiatric research can find the root cause/s of intellectual disability and develop appropriate prevention and treatment procedures the current incidence of intellectual disability will necessitate the continuing and possibly increasing need for supported accommodation well into the future. With increasing population the number of people requiring supported accommodation will also increase accordingly and any Government would be well advised to recognize this possibility now and provide for this inevitable contingency. Closing institutions will only add to the urgency of this situation and some overseas countries now have
realized the folly of closing their institutions and are reopening them where they still exist.

Item 6
Government responses to unmet accommodation needs have over the years been anything but spectacular as waiting lists continue to grow and successive governments have tended to encourage the development of policies, which discourage congregate care, by keeping intellectually disabled people in their homes and hopefully in their communities in the care of their families with some help from paid part-time carers. While this policy may save Government funds and may in some cases save a family from disintegration, it only offers a temporary solution to otherwise serious social problems relating to family breakups. It is difficult to understand why both State and Commonwealth Governments can proudly boast their huge financial surpluses when highly deserving causes such as the disabled are being starved of funds and have to rely on charities to continue to exist.

Item 10
As mentioned above in item 4, there is a pressing need for more full-time supported accommodation facilities to at least eliminate the urgent waiting lists and in many cases many more respite care centres to alleviate some of the stress on parents and families while they are waiting for their disabled family member to be admitted to full-time care. Adoption of the KCC’s proposal to redevelop the remainder of the former Kew Cottages site would help Victoria both defend and extend the range of services provided for the intellectually disabled, and help establish a new model for community-based care in Australia.

In our submission the “adaptive re-use” of existing Victorian Disability Services Infrastructure, such as Kew Cottages, will provide the Government with a new and very cost-effective option to deal with the current economic crisis.

As opposed to the Government’s current policy to “sell-off” public land and infrastructure in complicated and ‘confidential’ commercial arrangements with private developers ‘Adaptive re-use’ of existing ‘purpose-built’ disability infrastructure can help provide new services based on:

- Continuity
- Speed
- Flexibility, and
- Full public disclosure

As Secretary of the Kew Cottages Coalition Committee I would be prepared to appear before the Inquiry if required,

Yours faithfully,

D.F. Anderson
Attachments:

1. KCC Proposal for the Future Development of Kew Cottages and covering letter to the Victorian Minister for Community Services, The Hon Lisa Neville. 30-June 2008

2. Letter from Mr. Bill Shorten MP, to Mr Don Anderson, KCC, 29-Sep 2008

3. Letter from the Hon Sherryl Garbutt, Victorian Minister for Community Services 24-Oct 2003
Dear Mr. Anderson,

Thank you for your email of 27 May 2008 about the delay in the Stage 2 development at the former Kew Cottages site. I apologise for the delay in responding.

I would like to assure you that the Commonwealth Government is committed to providing disability services that meet the support needs of people with disability, their families and carers. Our aim is to offer practical support to enable people with disability to participate, as fully as possible, in community life, both socially and economically. The Commonwealth Government is currently working closely with State and Territory Governments to achieve these outcomes through the next disability agreement.

You may be interested in the outcomes of the Disability Ministers’ meeting held on 30 May 2008.

At this landmark meeting, the Australian Government in partnership with the State and Territories agreed to deliver a $1.9 billion funding boost to disability support services across Australia.

This important agreement included the $100 million in capital funding announced by the Prime Minister on 4 May which will deliver 309 new supported accommodation places across Australia.

In total the $1.9 billion in funding will deliver more than 24,500 additional disability places including:
- around 2,300 in-home support services
- 2,300 supported accommodation places
- 9,900 individual support packages and;
- 10,000 much needed respite places in a range of forms across Australia.
The Australian Government will continue to work with State and Territory Governments to start rolling out this significant investment and together all Governments are committed to strengthening services for people with disability and their families.

You will be pleased to know that Ministers also agreed to work to bring greater consistency for the supply of aids and equipment. Ministers will also work together to improve access to aids and equipment.

I have written to the Victorian Minister with responsibility for disability services, the Hon Lisa Neville MLA, about your situation. I have advised the Minister of the difficulties you are faced with and requested assistance on your behalf. I have included a copy of your email and asked for a response on my letter.

Once again, thank you for writing.

Yours sincerely

Bill Shorten


Suggest we write a brief note to Lisa Neville requesting advice on progress re our request to stop further development at Kew and convert Kew to a centre of excellence for 10 people.

Dow
3.10.08.
30th June 2008

Ms. Lisa Neville
Minister for Community Services
Level 22, 50 Lonsdale Street,
Melbourne 3000

Email: lisa.neville@parliament.vic.gov.au (Urgent Please)

Re: Kew Cottages Stage 2 and Beyond: A New Window of Opportunity for Victoria.

Dear Ms. Neville,

I note the Premier's Media Release of 4th June 2008, announcing the completion of the Kew Residential Services Project at Kew Cottages. I note also that today (30/6/08) is the completion date for Stage 1 of the Government's KRS Development contract with Walker Corporation.

Further to our referral to you from the Premier (25/9/07), and our earlier discussions with your office, I am, therefore, now writing to seek a meeting with you to discuss the future of the balance of the Kew Cottages site. (ie: Stage 2 onwards)

We believe a unique window of opportunity has now arisen at Kew Cottages to provide a new model of care for Victorians with intellectual disability, as well as integrating the environmental and recreational values of the site.

I enclose a copy of the Coalition's proposal as submitted today to the Upper House Select Committee on Public Land Development, and would be pleased to provide any further information that you require.

I understand the Upper House Committee will be reporting to Parliament in September 2008. Given the powers available to you as the responsible Minister under the Project Development and Construction Management Act S.12(1) I would respectfully suggest, therefore, that pending the Select Committee's Report to Parliament, and conclusion of deliberations of both the Upper House, and Heritage Victoria it would be in the public interest for you to now:

a) Review the proposed new disability service opportunities available, and
b) Give DOI and Major Projects written directions in relation to the nominated project, that they ensure all construction and demolition works at Kew Cottages are now constrained to within the current Stage 1 boundary.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Walsh
President

Encs:
Kew Cottages Coalition Proposal for KRS site

Background:
The future management of the KRS site represents a unique opportunity to provide a new model of care for Victorians with intellectual disability, as well as integrating the environmental and recreational values of the site. The contiguous physical location of the KRS site with the Yarra Bend National Park and the longstanding and welcomed interaction by KRS residents with the local Kew community represent important elements to the likely success of a unique multi-purpose re-birth of the site.

Proposal:
Development of the KRS site as a housing estate be hailed at Stage 1 and the remainder of the site be developed as an integrated Disability Support and Recreational area incorporating the following three key components:

1. Family Support & Respite Centre for the Disabled
   Previous models of care for the disabled relied heavily on residential and inpatient services. However, this model now has only limited relevance to the vast majority of the >3000 Victorians with intellectual disability since they are primarily cared for at home by their families. However, this important and welcome change has resulted in the need for a new form of support services whereby families can access reliable temporary and short-term respite care for their disabled children. Respite care has become especially important as parents of the disabled are aging and require their own medical services. Currently there are few options available for these families to have their disabled children cared for on a temporary basis in a setting with genuine expertise in disability. Furthermore, the pressures of long-term provision of disability care within the home is well known to lead to great intra-family stress and the need for simple respite care for families (often for only brief periods of a few days-weeks) is now acute. Thus, the establishment of a "Family Support & Respite Centre for the Disabled" on the KRS site would be a forward-thinking and welcome development. Many of the relatively new "H-block" buildings would be ideally suited to this task. Hence the establishment of such a useful Centre is likely to require minimal additional physical infrastructure.

2. Victorian Centre of Excellence for the Disabled
   Victoria, as has recently occurred in Queensland and other States, would benefit enormously from the establishment of a "Centre of Excellence for the Disabled" to focus future research on optimal treatment and care options for the disabled. Victoria is fortunate to have a number of high standard academic groups with an interest in disability. Establishment of a Centre of Excellence at the KRS site would assist in creating the appropriate academic critical mass to result in Victoria becoming a national leader in innovative and effective new means of caring for the disabled while ensuring maximal community integration.

3. Community Recreational and Sporting Precinct
   Close integration between the disabled and the wider Studley Park and Kew community has been a longstanding feature of the KRS precinct. The provision of sporting and recreational facilities that are designed to be used both by the residents of the Family Support & Respite Centre, the Centre of Excellence and the local community would be welcomed and would provide a unique opportunity of practical and real integration, which should be fundamental to any new vision of care for the disabled. Furthermore, appropriate development of such facilities can be undertaken in a manner that would complement the obvious environmental qualities of the area and enhance the physical links between the KRS site and the Yarra Bend National Park. Recent enquiries with key schools and sporting clubs in the region indicate that development of such co-shared facilities could be readily funded by local donations and funding commitments such that the establishment and long-term maintenance of these facilities could be achieved at no cost to the Government or local Council. This represents a rare opportunity to establish a unique multi-purpose sporting, recreational and environmental precinct that is associated with true integration between the disabled and a welcoming local community.
Minister for Community Services

The Hon Sherryl Garbutt MP
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EXC/03/10224

Mr Don Anderson
19 Towers Street
BEAUMARIS 3193

24 OCT 2003

Dear Mr Anderson

Thank you for your letter to the Premier dated 10 September 2003, in relation to the closure of Kew Residential Services (KRS). As Minister with portfolio responsibility for the KRS redevelopment your letter has been forwarded to me for response.

The Premier stated at that time that the funds from the sale of the KRS site would be made available to Disability Services. Disability Services refers to the Disability Services Division of the Department of Human Services. It has responsibility for implementing the Victorian Government's commitment to improving access, participation and support to people with a disability.

The Disability Services Division is responsible for funding and providing a range of supports and services for people in Victoria with intellectual, physical, sensory and dual disabilities, neurological impairments and acquired brain injury.

The funds from the sale of the KRS site will be in addition to the funds allocated via the annual budget process and the priority for their use is to establish new high quality modern accommodation in community settings for the residents of Kew Residential Services.

I trust the above information is of use.

Yours sincerely

Hon Sherryl Garbutt MP
Minister for Community Services