Southern Way
DIRECT CARE SERVICE INC.

9th October 2008

Family and Community Development Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Dear Committee,

Re: Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Supported Accommodation for those with a disability or mental illness

Southern Way Direct Care Service Inc is a non-government, not-for-profit, charitable organisation providing high quality care, accommodation and support services to people with disabilities in the South West region of Victoria.

Services are currently provided to over 100 people, approximately 70 staff are employed and over $2.0 million expended in the community. Services include fully supported 24 hour residential care and accommodation (via 2 houses and 9 residents), semi independent supported residential care and accommodation (1 house and 3 clients) and a fully supported 24 hour respite accommodation house (1 house and 4 bed places).

Southern Way is very concerned at the lack of bed based (facility) supported accommodation and the even greater lack of and hence need for bed based (facility) respite accommodation.

There are very limited places available for people or their families seeking fully supported residential accommodation, this is compounded further by the ageing of parents/primary carers or indeed an emergency/crisis situation with the death of a parent/primary carer who has looked after the person with a disability in their home.

As an example, we currently have a 27 year old wheelchair bound young lady whose parents (due to ill health) can no longer care for her in their own home, who is in our respite facility and has been there for 9 months as there is no other place (bed) currently available in what is a totally unacceptable and unsatisfactory situation.

In regard to facility based respite accommodation the situation has reached crisis point. This is not only due to no residential places being available and the taking up of available respite beds (as mentioned above) but simply demand exceeds supply.
The provision of respite bed accommodation enables the client and parents/primary carers to have a break and the benefit of this is immeasurable. Due to high demands for emergency and crisis accommodation as no or very limited other options are available, the ageing of parents/primary carers, the population growth of Warrnambool and people moving to this area all put increased and indeed intolerable pressure for respite facility based accommodation on providers such as ourselves.

As an example, we currently have 10-12 people (and families/primary carers) on the waiting list desperately seeking respite accommodation but due to the current lack of beds/places are unlikely to be offered this very important and valuable service.

Southern Way Direct Care Service Inc strongly urges increased funding allocations for the provision of supported and respite accommodation to create better outcomes for people with a disability and their families who are some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Yours faithfully,

Graham Kemp
Chief Executive Officer