Submission

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

10th October 2008

Summary

What do the Summer Foundation want?

Younger people in aged care have a diverse range of disabilities and support needs

- We want a range of accommodation and support solutions to meet these diverse needs and enable people to have a real choice about where they live
- We want creative and innovative solutions that enable people to be included in their local community

We want systemic change to prevent new admissions in the future

- Step down units in acute hospitals to give people with recently acquired injuries the time they need to recover
- Transitional living services, which will enable people to maximise their abilities and independence and provide a stepping stone to community living
- More resources and flexible funding to enable people to stay at home for as long as possible
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Background

Improvements in medical technology over the past twenty years have meant an increase in the number of people with living with severe disabilities. These people include those who have survived catastrophic incidents such as muggings/attacks, falling from heights or diving into shallow water, people who have suffered from episodes, which have deprived the brain of oxygen (eg severe asthmas attacks) and live longer with degenerative diseases such as multiple sclerosis.

Due to the lack of suitable accommodation and services younger people with severe disabilities have had no alternative but to be placed in aged care residential facilities. There are over 1000 people aged under 50 years living in aged care facilities (nursing homes) in Australia. This is due to the lack of alternative service and accommodation.

As a result of intensive lobbying on the part of younger people in nursing homes, on 10th February 2006, the Prime Minister announced the release of $244 million over a five-year period to address the social injustice experienced by younger people living in aged care. This announcement came out of a joint Commonwealth/State meeting- the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and provides an opportunity to develop some accommodation and support alternatives which will enable people under 50 to either move from aged care homes or to avoid being admitted to one. The COAG announcement is a tremendous breakthrough and provides an opportunity for collaboration by both levels of Government. Although this level of funding will not resolve the issue of younger people in aged care, it provides an opportunity to demonstrate some pragmatic alternatives to younger people living in aged care.

The Summer Foundation was established in January 2006, and is dedicated to overcoming the concerns of a section of our society that is overlooked, namely young people living in residential aged care (RAC). The foundation focuses on practical research and seeks to provide workable solutions to improve the health and well-being of this group.

Vision

That younger people with acquired and late onset disabilities and complex care needs will have inherent value as members of our society, with access to services and accommodation that support their health and well-being.
Mission

To foster the development of the next generation of services and solutions that promote the health and well-being of people with acquired and late onset disabilities and empower them to participate in the community and pursue a lifestyle of choice.

Summer Foundation Work To Date

my future my choice Assessment and Planning Framework and Report

In December 2006, as part of the my future my choice initiative, the Summer Foundation was appointed by the Department of Human Services to develop and implement a planning and assessment framework for younger people in aged care. In December 2007 we produced a report which aggregates the data from the my future my choice assessment and planning process.

To date, decisions about service planning and development for the target population have been based on limited quantitative data and anecdotal evidence. The information in this report paints a clear picture of the characteristics and lives of younger people living in Residential Aged Care (RAC) in Victoria and offers a range of pragmatic solutions to prevent future admissions to RAC, enabling people in the target population to participate in the life of the community and pursue a lifestyle of choice. This report is being used by the Department of Human Services to plan systemic change and develop services to meet the needs of younger people in RAC or at risk of admission to RAC. This report is available on our website www.summerfoundation.org.au.

From a home to their home DVD and Information Booklet

As part of the assessment and planning process, planners asked people where they want to live in the future. Many younger people living in aged care and their families had no information or knowledge about the possibilities. The Summer Foundation produced a DVD and booklet called ‘From a home to their home’ to enable people with disabilities and their families to make an informed choice. A funding grant from the WCF Thomas Trust, which is administered by ANZ Trustees enabled the Summer Foundation to initiate this project and was used as leverage to obtain additional funding from the Department of Human Services (DHS) to extend the project to include two more stories.

On the 28th June ‘From a home to their home’ was released and launched by Victorian Minister for Community Services, the Hon. Gavin Jennings. In July 2007, the Department of Human Services sent a copy of the DVD and booklet to everyone under 50 living in aged care in Victoria (221 people). The Summer Foundation has distributed an additional 180 DVDs and booklets to other families, workers, service providers, libraries and government bodies. We have also made the DVD footage available on our website as vodcasts.
Summer Foundation Knowledge Network

The Summer Foundation Knowledge Network provides accessible information via the internet to families and other stakeholders about services and resources relevant to either younger people living in aged care or at risk of aged care admission.

In January 2008 the Summer Foundation completed an audit of all the individual plans that we completed as part of the *my future my choice* assessment and planning process. We documented any services or resources that younger people in aged care were already tapping into and we also listed any services or resources that were recommended by planners. This information forms the basis of the Knowledge Network.

To find the knowledge network just go to [www.summerfoundation.org.au](http://www.summerfoundation.org.au) and click on the Search for Services link at the bottom left side of the page.

In order to inform families about the Summer Foundation Knowledge Network, we have developed a booklet and will provide copies to social workers and discharge planners at acute and rehabilitation hospitals. Goldman Sachs JB Were have agreed to fund the printing of 1000 copies of this booklet.

Current Projects

Summer Foundation Property Advisory Panel

The Summer Foundation recently established the Property Advisory Panel, which brings together leaders from the corporate sector, government and not for profit organisations who are working together to develop innovative solutions to the issue of younger people in nursing homes. The Summer Foundation Property Advisory Panel is an incubator for ideas and creative thinking about integrated supported accommodation for people with disabilities and high care needs (See Appendix D for a list of attendees at the first two meetings).

The Panel is currently working on a brief for property developers. The aim of this briefing paper is to provide property developers with the information they require to determine if some of the medium/high-density residential developments they are planning might be suitable sites for integrating supported housing for younger people with disabilities.

Transitional Community Accommodation Service

We plan to pilot a transitional community accommodation service (TCAS) for people with very severe TBI (traumatic brain injury) for five years. During this five-year period we anticipate that we can demonstrate significant improvements in independence and a substantial reduction in life-time care costs. The TCAS will admit people with a who have complex cognitive and behaviours of concern, but are medically stable and do not require daily nursing care or have very high physical support needs. The service will be resourced to manage people with higher levels of challenging behaviour who cannot yet be managed in community settings and will ensure the safety of people who are prone to wandering due to cognitive-behavioural issues. The target length of stay will be between 24 months during which time the interdisciplinary slow
stream rehabilitation offered will assist consumers to maximise their skills and establish their support needs in planning for discharge to community-based housing. The program will be evaluated by a prospective longitudinal study employing repeated measures of a range of variables.

Transition Outcomes Research

The purpose of this project is to utilise established tools and research findings to evaluate the impact of transitioning from residential aged care to community based care on the health and well-being. The Summer Foundation is not aware of any research to date, which examines the costs and benefits of younger people with disabilities moving from aged care to the community.

The specific research questions for this project are:

1. What areas of health and well-being improve as the result of the transition of people with complex care needs from RAC facilities or hospitals to alternative housing and support options?
2. Which personal and environmental factors predict higher levels of health and well-being in the alternative living environments?

This project will create a unique database of evidence to guide service planning and development and generate a framework to guide future transitions and enable ongoing quality assurance of these services.

Building Better Lives Initiative

Building Better Lives is a collaborative state-wide capital raising campaign which aims to engage the business community and the general public in raising funds to build alternatives for young people living in residential aged care. The campaign is led by the Summer Foundation and modelled on the Make Poverty History campaign where a range of organisations work towards the same goal under the one banner. The purpose of the Building Better Lives campaign is to collaborate with government, business and community service organisations to build dwellings to enable 150 young people in nursing homes to live in the community. This campaign aims to raise $10 million in cash and in-kind donations over five years. This funding will be used as leverage to secure further government funding for this target group and make sure the accommodation developed is both state of the art and innovative.

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