Inquiries into Supported Accommodation for those with Disability and Mental Illness

**Far East Gippsland** is a growing regional area with a current population of approximately 41,000 residents. We have a Specialist School which has at present 90 students enrolled. There are also many young adults and children in the area who have a disability and who attend mainstream school or are at home.

Due to changes in society and the expectation of people with a disability to be integrated into the community, the need for more supported accommodation in Far East Gippsland is urgent. They require assistance not only with daily living but also to be able to live independently of their families.

Placements for age appropriate accommodation in the East Gippsland Shire is very limited. There are few facilities in the area and as advances in medical care improve the life expectancy of people with a disability, these people will remain in their supported accommodation for many years. Currently young people with a disability access short term respite in Sale, however, due to the increase in the number of children and young adults requiring care, in the East Gippsland Shire, there is at present a waiting list for short term respite, which is in the Wellington Shire and a waiting list for supported accommodation, which is stressful for their carers.

Families often do not have the support of the wider family network and so the sole responsibility of full time care for their child or young adult is in their hands, they desperately need access to short term respite and supported accommodation which is age and gender appropriate.

Older parents will need supported housing for their children when they are no longer able to care for them.

Carers have no choice of age appropriate supported accommodation for family members, when their children leave school.

Lack of supported housing creates feeling of distress, negative feelings of self worth, confusion, anti social behavior, sadness, isolation, withdrawal from community activities, medical needs not being met, frustration, anger, and inappropriate public behaviour.
SHORT TERM RESPITE OPTIONS ARE NOT AVAILABLE in Far East Gippsland.

Carers’ mental health is at risk due to continual care of their child with high needs and unrelenting demands 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with school hours being the only relief for carers. This occurs only during the school hours and during the school term. Sometimes carers have more than one child with a disability in their care or also care for an older adult parent with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease, at home.

WE URGENTLY need short term respite accommodation in Bairnsdale. This would alleviate the added burden of transportation by carers to Sale and also decrease health issues relating to long distance travel for those with a disability. Local accommodation provides reassurance to families that those they care for are in a familiar location and within relatively easy access.

With the opportunity of short term respite, parents are able to focus on siblings and each other while their child with a disability is being cared for in a respite unit.

They need time to rest and gather their thoughts, pursue personal interests and engage in the workforce, without the extra challenge of preparing their child for the day, every day.

Parents/carers are able to get valuable and uninterrupted sleep.

Make and attend appointments without the extra challenge of juggling to finding short term respite.

EMERGENCY RESPITE accommodation is needed as current crisis needs are met with inappropriate accommodation. There is no emergency short term respite in East Gippsland.

LIMITED availability of IN HOME respite packages due to lack of trained staff to manage children with high needs.

INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION by carers and intake workers to address respite needs.

ALTERNATE types of accommodation could include a facility that is modelled on “Lifestyle” retirement villages. These could enhance friendships, recreational
activities, communal and living activities. These could also be supported by a variety of services which could be cost effective because those living in supported accommodation would be in one place. This could be as few as 20 people or more depending upon the design of the village. The wider community would become involved more easily at a centralised location.

A SHORT TERM RESPITE HOUSE, including Emergency respite close to the Specialist School would provide familiarity, less stress, less travel and reassurance to carers that their children are close by rather than between 60 and 300 kilometers away.

SUPPORTED ACCOMODATION attached to an existing business e.g. hospital or aged care facility, creating supervised employment opportunities e.g. hospitality, and environmental services.

Young people with a disability require supported accommodation to allow them to live independently but with support from services.

Rental accommodation through a real estate agency is difficult to access because of stigma, or challenging behavior of tenants with a disability.

There is an impact on courts due to inappropriate and illegal behavior when supported accommodation is not available for people with mental illness.

TOURIST ATTRACTION, HOBBY FARM, COTTAGE INDUSTRY e.g. herbs, wine making, beer making, could provide LIFESTYLE ACCOMODATION plus EMPLOYMENT.

A group home that also provides employment opportunities would be a welcome alternative. This could be a tourist type of facility, providing a café, restaurant, garden nursery, or animal nursery.

Cluster housing is an option that provides residents with a sense of community, company, shared resources and combined services, therefore being financially effective, and time efficient for service providers. Although if this type of accommodation was shared with the wider community this could cause concern regarding the types of residents also in the cluster. Those with disabilities need to be protected.
Support workers also have an obvious impact on the wellbeing of those with a disability and therefore need to be chosen carefully for their positive personal attributes and interactive skills.

Current issues, in my experience are as follows -

Two 19 year old males live in a youth shelter.

One student returned overseas to live as there was nowhere else available for her to live locally near her mother.

A 20 year old had to move to supported accommodation over 200klms round trip away from her family home.

More than one family receives no respite in home due to lack of availability of trained staff to care for their child.

Thankyou for this opportunity to express these views.

Yours truly

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