

My name is Cathy Nirta and I have muscular dystrophy.

In 1973 I was in a large institution which eventually became the largest in the southern hemisphere. I was 14 years old at the time.

I had a dream to move away from institutional living and had to fight very hard to keep my own identity and individuality until there was the right physical support for me to move away.

After living in institutions for many years I eventually had the opportunity to move into a house with two other people with physical disabilities where I am still living after sixteen years.

I am at present very disappointed at the fact that there are so many young people who are being inappropriately placed in aged care facilities in Australia as to me it appears we are grinding backwards rather than moving forwards. Could this mean that it could happen to me again one day?

I want to paint a picture to you, the committee, about what it is like living in such a facility.

Although there are staff who attempt to make life as comfortable as possible, life can be very lonely as nobody has the time to talk to you.

Feelings of life going nowhere and no future and boredom can make you debilitated because depression can take hold and eventually motivation diminishes.

Being surrounded by people with dementia also is distressing and contributes to depression. I will never forget how I cried for a woman who continually cried thinking she was in pain, or being surrounded by death, no young person should be subjected to such distress, IT ISN'T NORMAL.

Your life is shared by others, there is no privacy, and forget it if you are interested in someone as a partner.

Everyone has something to say about what you say or do.

So please, lets give a chance to my future peers and place them into appropriate living situations.

Cathy Nirta