



Villamanta Legal Service Inc

A Statewide Disability Legal Service

Villamanta advances the rights of people who have a disability related justice issue.

The Secretary

Senate Community Affairs References Committee
Suite S1 59
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

30 July 2004

Re: Inquiry into Aged Care

Dear Sir / Madame

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input into the Senate's Inquiry into Aged Care. I write this submission on behalf of Villamanta Legal Service, a statewide Victorian Legal Service which works on disability related justice issues.

In relation to the terms of reference of the Inquiry, we wish to make comment specific to:

- (c) **the appropriateness of young people with disabilities being accommodated in residential aged care facilities and the extent to which residents with special needs, such as dementia, mental illness of specific conditions are met under current funding arrangements.**

It is our understanding that currently over 6,000 young people nationally, are living in nursing homes and estimates suggest that by 2007 this figure is expected to rise to over 10,000 young people. We find this not only inappropriate, but completely unacceptable.

Nursing homes should never have been perceived as an appropriate accommodation option for young people, nor an appropriate rehabilitation option for young people.

We question both the Federal & State Government's commitment to resolving this issue and generally their commitment to people with disabilities, whose voice is often unheard and therefore not responded to. Leaving young people in nursing homes, with no exit strategies in place, and no development of appropriate accommodation and rehabilitation options for the future, highlights the lack of commitment the Government has to these people.

We do welcome this Inquiry as a starting point to resolve this unacceptable issue.

Areas of Concern:

- The lack of strategies by either the State or Federal Government to exit young people from nursing homes into appropriate accommodation models
- The lack of responsibility and commitment from either the State or Federal Government to address the issue – both suggesting it does not come under their jurisdiction, leaving the issue unresolved
- The lack of funds from the Federal Government to the States to enable them to resource the issue and develop new, appropriate and sustainable housing models
- The contradiction between the current practice and the Victorian State Disability Plan which talks of community inclusion and the rights of people with disabilities.

Our Recommendations:

- That the State & Federal Governments work collaboratively to address this national issue
- That the Federal Government makes an ongoing financial commitment to support the States to address this issue
- That a clear strategic plan is developed to exit the current young people from nursing homes
- That appropriate and sustainable accommodation models (including transitional models) are developed and based on community inclusion principles
- That a realistic timeframe is set to develop and implement these new models
- That clear guidelines are developed, relating to the unacceptability of young people in nursing homes, so that this cannot occur in the future.

We do appreciate the opportunity to have input into the Inquiry and are happy to talk to this submission at a later date. We look forward to the positive action that can hopefully come out of this process.

Yours Sincerely

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