



25 June 2010

Committee Secretary  
Senate Community Affairs References Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Senate Community Affairs References Committee – Inquiry into Planning Options and Services for People Ageing with a Disability**

For over 100 years, Villa Maria has delivered and developed services for older people and people with a disability. Each year, we provide care and support services to over 5,000 people across Victoria and more recently, southern New South Wales. Our unique service mix – aged and community care, disability services and specialist education – provides Villa Maria with valuable insights into the pressing needs, requirements, planning options and services for people ageing with a disability.

Specifically, Villa Maria provides complex clinical care and support for people with both high and low level care needs in our community through four residential aged care facilities, and within the community through Community Aged Care Packages, Extended Aged Care at Home (EACH) and EACH-Dementia Packages. Villa Maria also provides a broad range of Disability Services that includes shared supported accommodation, day services, case management, flexible community and facility based respite, individualised support packages and support for ageing carers. Our Mature Choices program and our Heidelberg respite house are two services developed by our disability services team specifically for people who are ageing with a disability and their carers. Providing support to over 60 people in shared supported accommodation settings across metropolitan Melbourne gives Villa Maria invaluable insight into the issues facing people with a disability as they age.

In the context of Villa Maria's extensive experience as a provider of services to older people and to people with a disability, we make the following submission in relation to the two areas of the terms of reference:

**1) Access to planning options and services for people with a disability to ensure their continued quality of life as they and their carers age**

Planning options and services available for people with a disability as they age are limited. In an organisation such as Villa Maria with extensive aged and disability services, we work with people to help them achieve their stated needs and maintain the quality of life they desire. We work with two systems – a disability sector funded by state government and an aged care sector funded by commonwealth government, who both provide individualised funding for people and encourage people to live in their home rather than entering a shared accommodation setting. **It is within this context that we recommend addressing three key issues:**



## a) Prevention and Early Detection

- i. Planning support for people with a disability who are exhibiting signs of early onset ageing through training/education/awareness/referral pathways for doctors, families, carers and service providers.

## b) 'Accessible' service provision and the need for new skills in the community

- i. **Appropriate services available** – it may not be appropriate for a person ageing with a disability to attend current services for older people; staff may not have specialist expertise and current clients may not be welcoming; consequently a specialist training program on managing/working with individuals ageing with a disability could be developed and disseminated.
- ii. **Retirement planning for people with a disability who are currently in paid employment** – allowing them to move on to another stage of their life and allow a younger person with a disability to take on the employment; we would advocate specialized/easier to access financial planning advice for people with disability.
- iii. **Carer planning and support** – as carers of people with a disability age along with their adult children, planning needs to be available that cuts across the two funding streams. In addition to the above, a one stop shop financial planning service could be developed to support both the person with the disability and the carer/family.

## c) Earlier access to Commonwealth Aged Care Funding – solving the 'gap'

- i. **The Commonwealth Government needs to explore specialized packages under the aged care planning framework as we do for individuals with dementia.** These packages could be specifically targeted for people with a disability who present with higher care needs much earlier than currently allowed under the ACAS assessment method.

## 2) Identify any inadequacies in the choice and funding of planning options currently available to people ageing with a disability and their carers.

Detailed below is Bob's story, which identifies some of the inadequacies individuals ageing with a disability face with respect to choice and funding of planning options.

### Bob's story

Bob lives in a shared supported accommodation setting supported by Villa Maria and attends a Villa Maria service five days a week. Bob is 59 years old and wants to stay home on Wednesdays because the five days at a day service wears him out. His individual package from the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) does not cover the staffing support that he requires to stay home. When DHS was asked about a package to support him to have his rest day, they advised that the option was to find three other people with a similar request, who have similar supports and the same interests and they could pool their money and pay for staff support between them in one place. If Bob was able to do this he would have to go somewhere with this group of people and this would not give him the rest day that he is seeking.



Bob's story highlights the issues facing many people as they age. In our work with older people, the overwhelming desire for most is to stay at home and receive support to do so. Responses to a recent survey of older people supported by Villa Maria overwhelmingly identified the purpose of Villa Maria as: *"To help aged people have a quality of life and live independently"* .


This choice can be supported by a Commonwealth funded Community Aged Care Package (CACP) or an Extended Age Care at Home Package (EACH) depending on the outcome of an assessment by the Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS). If Bob was to seek such an assessment, our experience is that the ACAS guidelines are unclear about ACAS responsibility in relation to assessing people with a disability and that there is inconsistency in ACAS practice. However, even if Bob was successful in receiving an assessment that he was eligible for an EACH or CACP package, he still may not be able to stay at home – the level of funding in an EACH package would be less than in an individualized package for someone in Bob's situation and so he would be financially disadvantaged if he accepted the EACH package and still unable to achieve his desire to stay home for one day a week.

**To allow Bob to remain at home, the changes required to existing frameworks would include three key changes:**

1. Exploring the provision of flexible funding that is appropriate and responsive to the needs of an individual – i.e. not tied to "aged" or "disability" services;
2. The development of streamlined entry points for funding to ensure access to the appropriate funds – people with a disability and their carers should not have to navigate a complex system to enable them to live the life they choose. We would advocate for a continuum of care model with a seamless funding transition from State to Commonwealth as the person ages. This could be achieved by Commonwealth Government DoHA and each State Disability service provider investigating a collaborative service model; and
3. Investigating whether a National Disability Insurance Scheme could provide outputs for a one stop shop for funding and include: preventable health and clinical care, support services for financial and retirement planning, a specialized arm of the scheme like Worksafe Victoria dedicated to awareness/education for employers/communities; and linking with Worksafe Victoria on issues like return to work.

Villa Maria would welcome an opportunity to further explore these issues.

Yours sincerely

  
**Valerie J Lyons (Ms.) - FCPA FCIS FAICD**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Villa Maria