

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF SUPPORT
ACCOMMODATION FOR VICTORIANS WITH A
DISABILITY OR MENTAL ILLNESS**

Presentation to the
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Kew Cottages Parents' Association

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Background

Since 1957, **Kew Cottages Parents' Association** (KCPA) has promoted the welfare of residents at Kew Cottages (later, Kew Residential Services (KRS)), through support for families, representation, fundraising and associated activities, and has lobbied to secure better services and rights for intellectually disabled people.

KCPA was formed and grew during a period of severe unmet need in Victoria. Parents struggled to gain access to a place at Kew for their son or daughter, frequently struggling at home for many years in the face of an almost complete lack of community support and understanding.

Throughout the past fifty years, the continuing inadequacy of government funding has done nothing to alleviate long waiting lists for supported accommodation and has led to periods during which conditions at Kew Cottages were unsatisfactory (food quality was poor, as were clothing and services; there was overcrowding, and staffing problems). Furthermore, government has repeatedly failed to properly assess and quantify both current and future demand.

Too many of these factors have not improved in 2008, and in some instances – for example waiting lists for accommodation – have actually deteriorated.

KCPA is uniquely positioned to comment on the suitability and adequacy of care for people with intellectual disability in Victoria. Prior to the KRS Redevelopment, the majority of our members had relatives living at KRS. Therefore, we are familiar with the concerns of individuals living in both congregate supported accommodation and community-based supported accommodation.

In 2008, the Association supports more than 230 individuals or families who have a relative living in a DHS Community Residential Unit (shared supported accommodation). In addition, KCPA provides information and advice through a regular newsletter to more than 700 family members, direct care staff, friends and advocates who are supporting a Victorian with an intellectual disability living either in a Community Residential Unit (CRU) or at home.

From 2001 until May 2008, KCPA was involved in the redevelopment/closure of KRS and has maintained a strong role in supporting our members through the process, which involved residents of KRS moving into 93 new Community Residential Units located throughout the suburbs of Melbourne and elsewhere in Victoria. The houses have been purpose built to comply with DHS standards, and are supposedly designed to cater to the needs of current residents.

Introduction to Presentation:

KCPA's presentation focuses on the experiences of our members and their intellectually disabled relatives now living in Community-based supported accommodation, although we are highly concerned about many of the issues covered under the terms of reference of the committee, such as unmet need and, in particular, the needs of ageing carers.

Of particular concern to KCPA are individuals with intellectual disability, particularly severe or profound, with attendant high support needs, challenging behaviour, complex medical conditions, psychiatric diagnoses or communication and/or decision-making impairment.

KCPA considers that the following improvements are required to bring current supported accommodation up to an appropriate standard, and to ensure a more uniform standard is achieved across the service:

1. The establishment of a National 'Standards and Accreditation Framework for Disability Supported Accommodation'
2. Increased government funding to properly meet the needs of Victorians with intellectual disability.
3. A wider range of models of supported accommodation to respond to different individual needs.
4. An improved staffing system, including increased staff training and qualifications, decreased dependency on casual staff, and increased staff support.
5. Greater recognition in legislation, policy and practice of the role of families of intellectually disabled people.

1. Establishment of a National 'Standards and Accreditation Framework for Disability Supported Accommodation':

The inconsistency of quality of care and support being received by individuals living in KRS CRUs indicates the need for the establishment of a National 'Standards and Accreditation framework for Disability Supported Accommodation'. This framework should be established by the Federal Government through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), on a similar model to the 'Residential Care Standards and Accreditation' established by the Department of Health and Ageing.

A stronger more effective process is required than the current state-based model managed by the DHS. Under the current 'Quality Framework for Disability Services in Victoria' (which includes the industry standards for Disability Services) the DHS is responsible for measuring, monitoring and improving disability supported accommodation. KCPA is also concerned about the conflict of interest and lack of independence arising as a result of the DHS having responsibility for both measuring/ monitoring and improving disability services while also being one of the state's largest providers of disability supported accommodation.

