

"It took years!"

It took years for the bureaucrats to accept a mother's cries that her son was totally misplaced in a Victorian government supported accommodation group home for those with an intellectual or multiple disability

This mother, an elderly widow in poor health, reluctantly accepted medical advice to accept a place for her adult son in a Victorian government group home. The medical advice suggested she was getting no younger to provide 24/7 care for her son, and should accept the first offer as places were very scarce.

Like many parents, she soon discovered the level and quality of care left a lot to be desired, and that her middle-aged and vocal son was living with elderly residents having little or no meaningful communications. Consequently, the only people in the house he can meaningfully communicate with, are the direct care staff.

For 20 years, this mother has been chastised and ridiculed by the massive range of government bureaucrats from the various avenues of government which protect government direct service provision from those who dare to assertively question service level and quality.

The captive market bureaucrats further reduced the mother's ability to represent her son, by appointing an employee of the Office of the Public Advocate as her son's guardian. This action finally removed any legal or moral rights this mother might have had to represent her son. It also ensures the government service provider has a pseudo government bed partner. An employee of a pseudo government department (the OPA) is highly unlikely to rock-the-boat with a government department (the DHS).

Where a parent is appointed guardian, they will fully represent their family member against all odds. In total contrast, an employee of a pseudo government department will naturally have most loyalty to their employer, and not wish to cause inter-department problems by fully and assertively representing their client.

After 23 Guardianship Hearings, over 23 years, at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), the Tribunal finally accepted the son needs to live with more compatible residents.

For over 23 years, this young man has effectively been living/isolated in an aged care facility. His quality of life has declined through receiving little more

than basic minder care, rather than quality of life care with interaction, developmental and social activities with compatible peers.

LISA Comment: This sad story further demonstrates the need for parents to live and fight forever - For reasonable rights for their family member against captive market bureaucrats who seem not to care that a person with limited intellectual capacity has had a large percentage of their already reduced lifestyle further reduced by bureaucratic due-process placement - incompatible DSR placement.

The DHS "Disability Support Register" controls almost all group home places in Victoria - government and non-government. All vacancies must go through the DSR. Clients and their families have no choice of group home service provider. Nor are they able to choose a government or non government service provider!

It is really frustrating for families to hear of wonderful CSO group home service providers who, even if they have a vacancy, are kept behind the DHS DSR firewall.

Extra 1: " Hidden from scrutiny":- Those entitled to see their care records, frequently have no ability to understand them! If they attempt to appoint an advocate to scrutinise these records, it is often deemed they have insufficient understanding to do so! Therefore, care records are mostly seen only by those who write them!

Last year the Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRC) considered parenting and or caring for an adult with a decision making disability within the review of the Guardianship and Administration Act 1986. Their consultation paper is due for release very soon. You can either download it from the Commissions website lawreform or contact Tess McCarthy at the Commission on 03-8608-7833.

Extra 2: "Medical Records"..... Finding meaningful medical services for those with high support needs is often a major problem! Doctor/Specialist shopping is common. However, be aware! Although the law says doctors must provide the patient with their medical records, they are entitled to keep a copy.

Extra 3: "Medical Catch-22" By law, a doctor is not entitled to discuss a person over 18 years with parents. Parents are, therefore, often left out where their family member has little understanding! They are also denied access to the service provider records of their adult family member, as common law says a person over 18 years is an adult no matter their level of ability.

Extra 4: "[Eating Slowly means Eating Less](#)" - A weight control factor. A healthy weight is often a problem for residents of supported accommodation group homes.

Extra 5: [Quality of Life - Active Support Avenues](#)

Extra 6: [Supported Accommodation Group Homes](#): Are they providing Quality of Life Care? La Trobe University and the University of Kent are cited to do research for the Australian Research Council.

Extra 7: "[Some Times You Get There](#)" - Good & Bad experiences of a family

Extra 8: [Big Test Looms in DHS Row](#) Sunday Herald Sun, Melbourne, 20 February.

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