

Major Restrictive Practices

*Restrictive practices against disadvantaged and vulnerable people,
and their families, by power hungry, power over people
government departments using public funding*

Two major state government agents in Victoria, the Department of Human Services and the Office of the Public Advocate, use their enormous government funding to ensure the residents of group homes in the community, where the DHS is the direct service provider, know their place in what are really little more than mini institutions/hostels.

With the level of bureaucratic control and restrictive practice, these houses in the community cannot be considered homes where the residents have reasonable rights... The residents have no choice of service provider or direct care staff, as the Department of Human Services refuses to allow residents of these group homes to have "Individualised Funding" and "Residential Tenancy Rights", despite the residents pay rent.

It is many years since community groups achieved the closure of most Institutions in Victoria, with the movement of most residents into group homes in the community. Many informed people say little has changed, as we now have mini institutions with similar bureaucratic practices.

With the movement to group homes in the community, came the "Community Visitor Program (CVP)" to allow detailed on-site evaluation of the service level and quality in these group homes. The CVP was well entrenched in good legislation, was recognised by all states as well ahead of its time and where community visitors were actively encouraged to meet with families.

In total contrast, we now see the CVP watered down under new legislation - the Disability Act 2006. And, the Office of the Public Advocate specifically refusing requests from families to meet with the community visitor/s who visit the group home where their family member and the other residents have no meaningful communications and are unable by reason of their disability to make reasonable judgements in respect of all or any matters concerning their personal circumstances and/or estate.

This restrictive practice means that when community visitors visit such a group home where they are able to communicate only with the service provider staff, community visitors hear only one side of the service. The Office of the Public Advocate will not, in these circumstances, permit community visitors to call the resident's family, guardian, advocate, friends or an independent third person to ask if they have any concerns about the level and quality of the service.

LISA Comment: The foremost concerns caring families have for their family member with an intellectual or multiple disability living in a group home is quality of life care. They want to see totally transparent service provision, where direct care staff consider the residents as their second family.

Whereas, the restrictive practices outlined above ensure the service remains covert with few reasonable rights for the residents, and with no choice of service provider or direct care staff.

We do not believe the state government's intention is that its funding be used to support such restrictive practices.

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