



MEDIA RELEASE

From Jude Perera MLA, Chair
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PARLIAMENTARY FAMILY & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COMMITTEE RELEASES REPORT OF INQUIRY INTO SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION FOR VICTORIANS WITH A DISABILITY AND/OR MENTAL ILLNESS

The Victorian Parliament's bi-partisan Family & Community Development Committee, today released the Committee's Final Report of its *Inquiry into Supported Accommodation for Victorians with a Disability and/or Mental Illness*.

The Chair of the Committee Mr Jude Perera MP said that the evidence the Inquiry had gathered showed that overall Victoria had made significant progress in improving the availability and quality of supported accommodation for people with disabilities and mental illness living in this state, but that more needed to be done.

"In Victoria, the last twenty years have seen a massive and positive change in societal expectations for people with disabilities and mental illness," Mr Perera said. "These include an increased recognition of the right to a quality of life and the right to participate fully in the community."

Mr Perera said, "These changes in community attitudes lead to the closure and redevelopment of nearly all residential institutions in Victoria. Our state has lead the way in the move away from institutional care and developing supported accommodation options in the community. Victoria has explored a range of alternatives to supported accommodation with the goal of assisting people to live independently in the community."

"The evidence the Committee collected shows that while there is huge support for the move away from institutionalized approaches, many witnesses indicated that there are high levels of demand that are not currently being met," Mr Perera said.

Mr Perera listed the introduction of the Disability Act 2006, the State Disability Plan 2002-2012 and *A Fairer Victoria* and *Because Mental Health Matters: Victorian Mental Health Reform Strategy* as the four significant legislative, policy and funding initiatives implemented over recent years that have made a positive and significant impact on the lives of Victorians with a disability or a mental illness.

The Committee has identified a range of issues relating to supported accommodation and makes 107 recommendations in its report. These issues include:

- The increased demand for accommodation and support services is affected by changes to eligibility for disability services and demographic changes (such as an ageing population and increasing complex and diverse needs)
- There is a need to improve the way services are delivered in the context of person-centred and recovery centred approaches, including a focus on building workforce capacity and the quality of service systems
- Community expectations of services are increasing. People with a disability and/or mental illness themselves are demanding more person-centred services. Witnesses also told the Committee that they are not seeing the benefits of the changes and there is a need for strategies that more effectively communicate the progress that is being made.
- While the Victorian Government leads the way in exploring alternatives to traditional models of support

and accommodation, there have been increasing forms of accommodation that have no support attached.

- While Victoria provides more supported accommodation than other jurisdictions in Australia with less Commonwealth funding, there is nonetheless a need for the Victorian Government to contribute additional resources towards the provision of supported accommodation for Victorians with a disability and/or mental illness, especially in view of the predicted population increases in this state.
- There is a need for the Victorian Government to improve its implementation and evaluation of the service programs it funds so that it can better explain to the general public why its reform progress has not always matched its stated objectives.

Mr Perera said that the Committee had received over 120 submissions and 12 public hearings had been conducted in many towns across Victoria, together with a number of site visits. He said that the Committee had heard from many individuals and organisations including families, service providers, researchers, representatives of people with a disability and/or a mental illness and unions.

Mr Perera especially acknowledged the valuable contributions made by people with disabilities and/or mental illnesses and the families and networks of carers who supported them and who shared their experiences with the Committee.

The Victorian Government has six months to table a response in the Parliament to the Committee's recommendations.

A copy of the Committee's report can be obtained from the Committee's website www.parliament.vic.gov.au/fcdc/default.htm or by contacting the Committee Secretariat on 03 8682 2843.

For further information or enquiries, contact Dr Janine Bush, Executive Officer, on 03 8682 2843. Victorian Parliament Family & Community Development Committee.