



## Young Persons in Nursing Homes Submission

Nursing homes are not considered an ideal setting for a wide range of reasons:

- Feb 04 there were approx 150 people under the age of 49 in Nursing Homes throughout Victoria. Surely this is an achievable figure to provide community based care options and support.
- In 2002 DHS Barwon South West Region via the Shared Supported Accommodation program failed to provide any ABI specific residential facilities. At present there are no ABI specific residential facilities in the South West Region. People with an ABI who are placed in a Community Residential Unit with people who have an intellectual disability often experience poor outcomes. People with an ABI have had a period of normal development and usually have developed a wide range of skills and knowledge. After ABI intellectual abilities are often largely unchanged. Placement in this environment can lead to poor self concept and self esteem, lack of stimulation and an increase in challenging behaviours.
- In Lyndoch nursing care there are 6% of residents under 65 with an ABI while 2.3% of residents under 50 have an ABI. This figure will increase with an ageing carer population.
- Young Persons in Nursing Homes are excluded from the Disability Services Acts and Standards.
- Nursing homes do not provide age appropriate activities for younger people with disabilities. Staff are inadequately trained to meet health and life style needs. This is because nursing homes have a primary focus on supporting frail elderly people. A high percentage of people with an ABI are young males. Often there are challenging behaviours associated with an ABI. The potential for exacerbation of challenging behaviours is likely to increase where individuals are placed in an inappropriate environment as is the case for young persons placed in nursing homes with frail elderly people.
- Once young persons enter nursing homes they tend to be forgotten and fall between the cracks of the community care system. They are excluded from many community services which offer equipment, therapy and recreation.

There is limited availability to funding such as Assisted Community Living Packages designed to enhance community inclusion.

- There is less opportunity for interaction with same age peers. Friends taper off and the person with an ABI often does not have the ability to maintain social contacts.
- There is a perception that the aged care culture is in contrast to a rehabilitation culture. A rehab culture means much more than therapy input. It is a process that enables people to return to optimum function.

### **How does nursing home become an option?**

- Recovering from ABI is slow to recover in nature.
- Families exhaust other possibilities for care and endure personal, financial, social and economic stress in the process prior to making the decision to seek placement in a nursing home.
- Access to support packages such as Home First often involves a lengthy waiting period that may be beyond the ability of carers to provide ongoing care.

### **Recommendations**

- Accommodation that meets the needs for young people with an ABI should be provided.
- This should be based on a rehabilitation philosophy with emphasis on access to therapy, community inclusion, age and interest appropriate activity and individual choice.
- Where people choose to remain at home, appropriate levels of funding and support should be available in a timely fashion. This level of support will need to be ongoing and able to meet the needs of individuals over time.
- Accommodation options should be accessible within a person's community. There should not be an expectation that people should have to move out of region to attain suitable accommodation and support services.

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