

**Inquiry into Supported Accommodation for Victorians  
with a Disability or Mental Illness  
Family and Community Development Committee**

The Family and Community Development Committee is undertaking an inquiry into supported accommodation for Victorians with a disability and/or mental illness.

The Committee received references from both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council on this topic. While there are some differences in the Terms of Reference there are many similarities and the committee has elected to conduct the inquiries concurrently.

In this special VALID Bulletin we present summaries of submissions that VALID has presented in association with other advocacy organisations from across Victoria. Full versions of these submissions are available from our website: [www.valid.org.au](http://www.valid.org.au)

**JOINT SUBMISSION ON BEHALF OF PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL  
DISABILITY AND THEIR FAMILIES**

**VALID:**

Victorian Advocacy League for  
Individuals with Disability



This submission has been prepared by four advocacy organizations, with a specific focus on Victorians with an intellectual disability and their families, as a response to the Inquiries into Supported Accommodation for those with Disability and Mental Illness by the Committee of Family and Community Affairs in the Victorian Parliament.

**STAR Victoria Inc.**

Advocating for people with an intellectual disability and their families.



The submission is based on the experiences of our organisations in supporting people with intellectual disability and their families and also draws on Australian and international research, about accommodation and support for people with intellectual disabilities. We focus in particular on the extent of unmet need and the implications for people with intellectual disabilities and their families, on the one hand, and congregate-care models of service provision, on the other.

**REINFORCE Inc:**

Victorian Association of Intellectually Disadvantaged Citizens

Reinforce Inc

**AMIDA:**

Action for More Independence and Dignity in Accommodation



We call for extensive and immediate response to unmet need, that is sensitive to the principle of community inclusion, the complexity of factors which determine quality of services and the diversity of the population of people with intellectual disabilities.

*Also included within this special bulletin is the summary of the VDAN (Victorian Disability Advocacy Network) submission (page 3).*

## 2. Summary of recommendations

### 2.1 Extensive and immediate response to unmet need

- A proactive population needs based planning approach be adopted, so that funding for current and future accommodation and support is planned to take account of the current and future projected population of people with intellectual disabilities, their location, characteristics and support needs.
- Allocation of services and funding packages must be based on a holistic understanding of the intensity of a person's support needs including physical, emotional and developmental.
- A person assessed as eligible for disability services should not be denied access to housing and support services, either in the form of shared supported accommodation or an individualized package of support and access to social housing.
- Public and social housing should be significantly increased. All new units should meet accessibility standards for people with physical disabilities, and a significant proportion of all units should be allocated to people with disabilities.
- Lack of timely and adequate access to support services must not be a barrier to entry into social or public housing. The office of housing, housing associations and disability services should work in partnership to establish effective coordination of housing and support.
- More respite services are provided to support families caring for people with intellectual disabilities. New and existing respite services should not be used as long-term accommodation.
- Emergency housing should be established to provide immediate short-term accommodation for people with intellectual disabilities in crisis, particularly those experiencing homelessness or exposure to abuse. Long-term housing should not be used as crisis housing, and crisis housing should not be used as long-term accommodation, but as a temporary arrangement while an appropriate long-term placement is established.

### 2.2 Commitment to deinstitutionalization

- Housing and Support models developed, including response to unmet need, must not offer congregate care, cluster housing or institutionalised options which are inherently contrary to principles of community inclusion in the Disability Act and the State Disability Plan.

- The State Government make an unequivocal commitment within a specific time frame to close the Colanda and Sandhurst Training Centres and other state-funded congregated facilities, including Plenty Residential Services.
- Residents who move out of congregated facilities must be given a choice of community-based options that include housing as well as support appropriate to their needs

### 2.3 Development and refinement of a range of housing and support models with attention to diversity among people with intellectual disabilities, and commitment to the principles of the Disability Act and the Disability State Plan.

Individualized funding packages should be attached to a person-centred plan and systematically audited to ensure quality outcomes consistent with the Disability Service Standards.

- Independent advocacy must be strengthened to support people with intellectual disabilities when applying, planning and implementing plans for support and accommodation.
- People with more complex support needs should not be excluded from individualised funding.
- Intensive specialized housing and support options, delivered by experienced provider organisations should be put in place to enable people with challenging behaviours to move out of group homes, where such a placement is clearly detrimental to their quality of life and inappropriate for them.
- Housing and support options, particularly shared supported accommodation, must be funded in a way that support can be adapted to the changing needs of people with intellectual disabilities as they age, to enable ageing in place.
- The disability sector should take a leading role in the provision of housing and supports for older people with intellectual disabilities, to avoid premature and inappropriate admission to residential aged care and to develop the capacity of the geriatric and community aged care services to provide services to people with an intellectual disability who are aging.
- People with higher levels of support needs, people with challenging behaviours and older people with intellectual disabilities should not be excluded from new models of housing and support that are developed. Specialist innovative programs should be developed for these particular groups.

- Development of new models of housing and support should occur alongside strategies to improve the quality of support provided by shared supported accommodation. It should be acknowledged that shared supported accommodation is not a defunct model, but one that holds significantly more potential than is currently realised in Victoria.
- People must be able to exercise choice about residents with whom they share a home, including possibilities for sharing accommodation with a partner.
- Continuous staff development through ongoing training programs. House-supervisors should be supported to play a more significant role as mentors working closely with all other staff members.
- Systematic and independent monitoring of the quality of service across the shared supported accommodation system to ensure all services meet standards, without increasing the administrative burden on staff.
- Significant resources immediately allocated to refurbishment of CRUs in a way that improves their design to allow more private space and less shared space, including breaking up of larger houses into smaller units, where possible, to deliver better quality outcomes and address issues of tenant incompatibility.
- People living in shared supported accommodation wishing to move out should be provided with sufficient supports to be able to do so.
- People with intellectual disabilities living in all forms of housing should enjoy full tenancy rights comparable to the rest of the population.
- Tenancy rights should include a right for immediate and proper response by proprietors to maintenance issues.
- All people with intellectual disabilities should have opportunities to develop their independent living skills and be able to access the supports necessary to lead an active life in their community.

## Victorian Disability Advocacy Network (VDAN) Submission (SUMMARY VERSION)

### Introduction:

This submission represents the views of the Victorian Disability Advocacy Network (VDAN) members relating to the need for and provision of supported accommodation for people with a disability in Victoria. It has been developed to reflect the expertise and experience of VDAN members and articulate their common view of systemic issues and viable solutions. These member agencies, as the funded disability advocacy agencies dealing with service failure, have a unique evidence-based perspective.

### VDAN Members Views

VDAN members:

- Strongly endorse the Government and community's commitment to supporting participation in the community by people with a disability through the delivery of **non institutional services** and the continuation of de-institutionalisation. (For evidence supporting the value of non institutional services we refer you specifically to the Submission on behalf of people with intellectual disability and their families presented by VALID, STAR, AMIDA and Reinforce);
- Expect that all parts of Government, particularly all Divisions and Regions of the Department of Human Services (DHS) operate within a **consistent framework** for policy and service that delivers the appropriate services to people with a disability;
- Are committed to the delivery of **the Disability State Plan 2002-2012**.
- Recognise that there are many **good models** largely unrecognized or replicated within the Victorian service system; and
- Supports the development of new service models where their effectiveness and sustainability is demonstrated.

### Upcoming Hearings

The committee has scheduled the following public hearings:

21st October - Traralgon  
 22nd October - Melbourne  
 23rd October - Geelong  
 5th November - Melbourne  
 6th November - Mildura  
 19th November - Bendigo

Further details will be provided as programmes for each date are confirmed.

### Family and Community Development Committee

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 East Melbourne, VIC 3002 Australia  
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## However VDAN members have identified that:

- The service system is based on **crisis management** not the long term, strategic planning that is required which is consistent with the finding of the Victorian Auditor General 2008 review.
- Without the systemic development of good service models of support and accommodation, **poor models** will evolve, often as crisis response.
- The lack of appropriate short and long term housing options with appropriate support is causing **displacement** into other parts of the service system incurring significant cost and reducing capacity.
- Housing capital funding for accommodation for people with a disability with high support needs has largely **ceased**.
- **No other significant source** of funding has been provided by Government beyond small scale innovation programs and stock replacement programs.
- Government through a variety of Departments, Divisions, Regions and Programs is **funding inadequate and inappropriate solutions** sometimes indirectly.
- Government is not requiring **consistent and robust standards** for services used by people with a disability.
- There is **uncoordinated development** of accommodation and support for people with a disability.
- CRUs are being filled through a crisis based system leading to **increased numbers of permanent vacancies** and displacement of residents.
- There is a **lack of leadership and advocacy within Government** (sometimes due to limited mandate or resources) from agencies responsible for services to people with a disability.

## Required Responses

- VDAN members believe that, to achieve appropriate, effective, efficient and sustainable solutions, it is essential the following actions be taken:

## Roles of Government

- That a whole of Government approach be developed for accommodating people with a disability across all departments, authorities, divisions and regions linking with and ensuring consistency with existing standards.

## Social Housing (public, community and affordable)

- That current levels of access to social housing be maintained.
- That new social housing be allocated with:
  - 50% to people with a disability.
  - Of that allocated to people with a disability
    - a half should be reserved for people in receipt of Government funded disability support services; and
    - a fifth for people with a disability with high support needs.

## Tenure

- That short term accommodation (including crisis, transitional and respite) not be used for long term accommodation.
- That long term accommodation not be used as short term accommodation.

## Standards

- Government establish and enforce an integrated set of standards (linked to State Plan) for all directly and indirectly Government disability funded services. This would extend beyond the existing disability standards and quality framework to include supplementing existing standards in areas where the disability standards do not currently apply.
- That the service standards support client choice.

## Development of new Models and Services

- That existing service models be evaluated and good ones replicated.
- That the development of housing and support be co-ordinated.
- That the development of large scale aggregations of people with a disability (often more than 20 people on one site) cease.

## Family and Individual Contribution

- That, where families provide financial resources to assist in the provision of housing and support, the arrangements are simple, clear and equitable.
- That family or individual contributions (or the lack thereof) do not affect the access to a Government funded or provided service.