

Complaints against disability care on the rise

"Complaints to Victoria's Disability Services Commissioner increased last financial year, a new report shows".

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There was an increase in the number of complaints made to Victoria's Disability Services Commissioner in the last financial year.

In an annual report tabled in State Parliament, the Commissioner Laurie Harkin said complaints increased by 12 per cent.

Most were about the level of care and communication from service providers, and were made by families of people with disabilities.

Three per cent of complaints were about alleged abuse from carers, or staff.

Commissioner Laurie Harkin's 2011/12 annual report says complaints from families of people with disabilities, mostly concerned with the level of care and communication from service providers, increased 12 per cent.

A small number of the complaints were about alleged abuse from carers or staff, according to the report tabled in state parliament on Tuesday.

"Three per cent of complaints to DSC specifically related to alleged assaults or harm by staff, while seven per cent of complaints to service providers also related to specific concerns about intimidation, bullying, abuse or neglect by staff," the report said.

Mr Harkin said the trend showed "increased attention to these serious issues and growing preparedness of people to speak up and report issues or incidents of concern".

The overall number of inquiries and complaints increased from 682 to 832 between 2010/11, a rise of 22 per cent.

Mr Harkin said 90 per cent of complaints to his office had achieved "positive outcomes", with 69 per cent fully resolved and 21 per cent partially resolved.

LISA Comment: It is encouraging to see families more confident to speak-up against bureaucratic bully-boy tactics, especially those used by government direct care services.

Level and quality of care v minder care is a major concern for all families, especially where the family member has high support needs and cannot speak/communicate effectively. Nevertheless, even those who can speak/communicate for themselves, are frequently not believed.

So we say the onus should be on the service provider to consistently prove to the family how good the service is. Rather than the consumer be expected to prove the service is not good. It is a catch 22 for families, as they can't be a 'fly on the wall', and are therefore told that what they see is not how it is.

Note: LISA 'Limited Distribution' is due only to resource limitations. Please help spread the word of these. And, keep us informed of happenings both in Australia and overseas which have the potential to help the cause.

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