

The System is Sick!

"Jaimee's tied up in red tape!"

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By Marianne Betts

A young woman with a rare neurological disorder wants nothing more than to leave the hospital bed she has occupied for 10 months, but red tape is preventing her.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures reveal that to keep Jaimee Busbridge in hospital costs up to four times more than it would for her to be cared for at home up to \$1100 a day in hospital compared with \$274 if she were out.

The Department of Human Services approved Ms Busbridge's \$100,000-a-year support package five months ago, but she has been told there is no money to actually provide it.

Ms Busbridge, 24, has dystonia, for which there is no cure. "I'm feeling overwhelmed over it all," Ms Busbridge said.

Her family say she should have left Epworth Hospital nine months ago. She is not the only Victorian to be in this predicament.

The Herald Sun revealed last August that Chante Masset, 12, a quadriplegic after a swimming accident, remained in the Austin Hospital for 11 months, several months after her care package had been approved and she was able to go home. This again was because the funding was not available to provide her package.

Young People in Nursing Homes Alliance national director Dr Bronwyn Morkham said keeping Ms Busbridge in hospital was not only "a complete waste of resources" but she was occupying a bed another patient could have. It was not the department's fault but the underfunding of disability services by federal and state governments, Dr Morkham said.

Ms Busbridge had fallen through the cracks and many in her situation ended up in aged care nursing homes, which was inappropriate, she added. A department spokesman said Ms Busbridge's needs were complex and she had priority

listing for an individual support package, which she would receive when funds became available.

Editorial Comment:

Jaimee Busbridge has been in Epworth Hospital for 10 months. Not so rare is the bureaucracy preventing her from going home at a saving to the taxpayer of hundreds of dollars a day.

Jaimee Busbridge had her home-support package approved by the Department of Human Services. But there are no funds available.

Last year, the *Herald Sun* revealed a quadriplegic patient was forced to stay in the Austin Hospital for 11 months for the same reason.

The hospitals are being forced to provide a bed that could be used by others because the cost of a home carer cannot be met by another government department.

This is a ridiculous situation and one that could be solved with the minister responsible being able to make emergency funding available.

LISA Comment: We are not surprised the Department of Human Services, Victoria, could not fund this home care. The bureaucratic bungling and buying-not-managing their way by this state government department is a disgraceful waste of public money.

We have wall to wall evidence of departmental in-fighting and questionable activities not conducive to good service and money management, which wastes so much public money in a myriad of ways. Whilst this state government department under-funds CSOs, and those like Jaimee Busbridge.

We trust the NDIS process, however it might finally be, will reduce government waste (indeed, keep government out of direct service provision) and ensure every dollar is focused towards meaningful and quality of life care for people with a disability.

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