

# Whittlesea care lobby bullied by the DHS!

13 Jul 2010 by Cheryl Balfour, Whittlesea Leader

Some Respite Alliance of Whittlesea members claim they are intimidated and angered by phone calls from the Department of Human Services.

Alliance spokesman Trevor Carroll says an undated letter recently sent out by DHS disability services manager Dorothy Wee had 15 inaccuracies about the services available to Whittlesea carers.

Mr Carroll said members who received the letter had received follow-up phone calls.

“The consequence of this letter now is that there are people in need of respite who feel intimidated,” he said.

“They are scared that since the DHS has their contact details, they might be put on a blacklist for respite in the future.

“This is an abuse of the confidential DHS database.”

Epping carer Gwenda Walton received the letter and a phone call from a department employee on July 5.

“I’m quite annoyed about it,” she said.

“She (the employee) asked me what I thought about the letter and basically told me that there were enough respite beds around.

“She told me about individual support packages, but I told her that we’ve been knocked back twice for that.”

Department spokesman Paul Heinrichs said the letter and follow-up calls sought to provide clear information to carers and families about the support available.

“The (DHS north-west) region has since spoken with many of the families individually to listen to any outstanding concerns,” he said.

“None have expressed any issues with the information provided.”

The State Government confirmed last week that a meeting had been organised between the alliance and Community Services Minister Lisa Neville, scheduled for Monday, July 12, after the Whittlesea Leader’s deadline.

State Government spokesman Chris Owner said that at the request of Yan Yean state Labor MP Danielle Green, Ms Neville and Ms Green would meet the alliance on Monday to discuss concerns and better understand the pressures carers were under.

## **Comments from Readers**

**Barb** writes:

I really feel sorry for these carers as it is hard enough for them already without such insensitive treatment by DHS.

DHS seems to be so badly run that it barely functions. It hurts people who have the least resources to deal with it, an intolerable injustice.

I wish the carers well and commend the person who got the Leader involved. In the end, the media is the only chance that voiceless people have.