

# Yooralla Seriously Mishandled Complaints!

([LINK](#))

by Nick McKenzie and Richard Baker, The Age, August 21, 2012

Yooralla seriously mishandled internal complaints about a staff member now facing charges of repeatedly raping or sexually abusing at least four intellectually disabled people.

A confidential internal inquiry commissioned by the disability service has found a team leader saw the male carer on a bed with a disabled client but failed to report it. This was before residents alleged they had been raped by the carer.

The inquiry's report accused the team leader of "poor performance" and recommended he should be disciplined for breaching rules requiring him to report serious incidents.

The carer - who worked for Yooralla between 2009 and early this year - faces rape and abuse charges involving several disabled residents of Yooralla facilities.

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Detectives charged him in March. Investigations are continuing over whether he abused disabled clients at other residential facilities.

The inquiry report, by consultancy Lifeworks, along with confidential internal emails obtained by The Age, reveal that:

A Yooralla area manager advised another senior staff member "to fill in a causal feedback form rather than make a formal complaint" about "inappropriate sexual comments" made by the carer before he was accused by residents of rape.

A Yooralla team leader reacted with "scepticism" when the abuse allegations were first reported to him by a disabled resident.

Yooralla staff have detailed "a litany of stories about lack of back-up, poor management, being left without a manager and being 'kept in the dark' about important matters", including Yooralla's handling of rape allegations.

The revelations add to existing concerns about the treatment of intellectually disabled Victorians in state-funded care. The Age last month reported 112 cases of alleged sexual and physical abuse by carers last financial year.

The Lifeworks' report states that the team leader who failed to report the carer has "in hindsight recognised that it was probably inappropriate, [but] at the time he did not consider it to be a big issue".

It reveals that the team leader "has admitted to having some initial scepticism" when he was later told by a disabled client of suspected sexual abuse.

"His first reaction was that perhaps [the disabled resident] had misunderstood or misinterpreted something that had happened," the report states. "[The team leader] stated that he was very busy

and quite distracted that day and this contributed to his initial reactions to the allegations."

After learning the "full details of the allegations" the team leader asked other staff to complete an incident report.

The team leader did not immediately report the matter to police, claiming that "the incident report he received was not complete and required further work on his part. Once the report had been finalised he then made contact with police."

The report reveals that the team leader later rewrote an internal incident report dealing with a sexual abuse claim.

The Age reported the Yooralla rape allegations in June, as well as complaints from two families of disabled men who were cared for by the accused man. At the time, the families said they were "disgusted" Yooralla had told them of the carer's alleged activities weeks after he had been charged.

Yooralla's general manager, Jennifer Boulton, has previously defended its handling of the matter and stressed it has been "examining ways of tightening staff supervision and ensuring earlier detection of potential misconduct or abuse".

**LISA Comment:** It is always the tip of the iceberg which attracts media bright lights! The media is rarely concerned about the effect on those in the care of the Department of Human Services, Disability Services, Victoria, with its extensive reactive management which is in total denial that it is failing to provide care consistently within its extensive care policies, standards and values.

When families raise service level and quality concerns, the department maneuvers every which way to sweep matters under the carpet. When they take these concerns to pseudo government departments such as the Ombudsman, the OPA, the ODSC, VCAT, etc, these departments consider the DHS knows best, no matter what they say or don't say.

Where families, in sheer frustration, direct their concerns to the Minister for Community Services, the matter is frequently given to the department to directly answer with little or no credibility check by the Minister's office. The department's standard issue avoidance and manoeuvre every which way answer, is to state at great length how the service should be, rather than properly investigate the matter. "Why is the department so determined to avoid, rather than address its complaints?"

Department management know they must not upset direct care staff by setting expectations. As, by law, the department must have staff and care policies in their group homes to show a minimum safe environment for vulnerable people.

**Extra 1:** Yooralla families are advised to make contact through:  
[yorallafamilies@gmail.com](mailto:yorallafamilies@gmail.com)

**Extra 2:** Carers Alliance NSW - [NDIS Media Release - 22 August 2012](#)

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