

Diamond Valley Leader

Supported Care Crises, Megan Bailey, December 4, 2013

Parents despair of finding share house for daughter:

One of Annette and Laurie Bain's biggest fears is that their daughter Carlie will not have a place to call home when they are no longer there to look after her.

The Diamond Creek couple never considered relinquishing their daughter, 37, who has intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder, but would like for her to be able to live more independently.

They have been looking for a room for Carlie in shared supported accommodation for years but there is nothing available.

Shared supported accommodation would allow her to live in a share house with 24-hour help from carers.

Mrs Bain, 62, said unless the National Disability Insurance Scheme provided more accommodation funding, it was unlikely anything would open up until a client in an existing spot died.

She said she and her 63-year-old husband would struggle to look after Carlie as they aged and didn't want their other children to worry about finding accommodation for her.

"The fear is that she will still be at home with us when we are 80 or 90," she said. "By the time you are 37, it's good to be able to live out of home."

Department of Human services spokesman Mike Griffin said 127 new supported accommodation options were planned over the next two years.

Plans include one, two and three-bedroom units, shared townhouses and apartments but none will be available in Nillumbik or surrounds.

Ninety families face crisis in caring for children:

Ninety families in Nillumbik and Banyule will be in desperate need of housing help during the next few years, the head of a Lower Plenty disability support centre says.

Araluen chief executive Ross Coverdale said many older carers would struggle to find affordable public housing unless something was done by the state and federal governments to help.

Mr Coverdale said the National Disability Insurance Scheme covered support packages for more carers, but contained nothing for affordable housing.

He said many carers looked after their children into their 80s and others had spent much of their adult lives not working full time, which made it hard for them to find affordable housing.

"Most carers do not do paid work and if you care for someone with a profound disability and do paid work, you cannot work full time," he said.

"For years there was no money for support staff but sometimes you would get government support to buy bricks and mortar.

"Now with the promise of the NDIS, there will be some packages for support but no money for houses."

Araluen had backed a mixed-use eco-village development in Hurstbridge but the project was scuttled.

The project would have made 25 social housing units available for ageing carers and their adult children.

Mr Coverdale said people who had spent their lives caring for their children, rather than putting them into state-funded care, deserved to be helped.

LISA Comment: When the NDIS was envisaged, there was a danger of services being more of the same, in contrast to more of the better. There is now every indication of there being less of the same.

More of the better was that existing group home block support service funding for each resident would be replaced, at no extra cost, by ISP support service funding. Thus moving service provision towards entitlement rather than charity-handout.

With much of the watery NDIS funding being chewed-up by the NDIA growing its bureaucratic empire, to which Joe Hockey alerted recently, and the need to develop a common service fee nationwide, the NDIS has put group home requests in the too hard and too expensive baskets.

So with little hope of existing group home residents being converted to NDIS, ISP, support service funding in the near future, the DHS refusing to redefine its group home support service block funding to ISP, and the potential for the Disability Amendment Bill (Vic) to remove any chance for group home residents ever having real residential tenancy rights, the residents of these facilities remain a very long way from ever having real choice and control in their hostel style home.

With the DHS now providing numerous generic ISPs, as is the NDIS, there is little left for the higher cost of those wanting supported accommodation group homes. Hence the state government's earlier attempt to cash-grab from existing residents, and their continued attempt to have all group home residents contribute towards their support service cost through a national aged-care, hostel style living package.

NDIS Comment: It is envisaged that by September 2014, all existing Victorian Government clients in the launch site will have transferred to the NDIS. Because of this, it is important that people activate their plans with their service providers as soon as their plans are approved so that the NDIA can pay for their supports. Even people who are happy with their existing level of support and their existing service provider still need to have their plan activated so that funding arrangements can be changed.

Those people that have not transitioned across to the NDIS will continue to receive their supports from their existing providers and the Victorian Government, up until the time that their NDIS support plans are approved.

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