

Question on Notice

No. 521

Asked on Wednesday, 19 April 2006

MRS MENKENS MP asked the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (**MR PITT**) –

With reference to the case of Shevaune Conry who was featured on the television program 60 Minutes on Sunday 9 April 2006 who, at age 33 and suffering from multiple sclerosis was no longer able to be cared for at home by her husband and found that her only accommodation option was a residential aged care facility—

- (1) Are there, in fact, any high care facilities in Queensland catering for the needs of young persons with disabilities such as Shevaune Conry?
- (2) If there are indeed no appropriate facilities of this kind, why has the Government not recognized this need?
- (3) What does the Government intend to do to ensure the provision of appropriate high care facilities for younger people with disabilities in Queensland

ANSWER:

In Queensland there are a number of high care facilities catering for people with disabilities under the age of 50. These include Jacana and Casuarina Lodge that provide slow-stream rehabilitation for people with acquired brain injury and Halwyn and Birribi that provide residential services for young people with congenital disabilities. Non-government organisations such as the Multiple Sclerosis Society, the Cerebral Palsy League and Montrose also receive State Government funding to provide high care residential services.

Some young people with disabilities do live in residential aged care facilities for a number of complex reasons including the need for nursing care or intensive levels of personal care support, geographical location, individual or family choices or limited alternatives to meet the younger person's needs.

The Queensland Government has recognised a need to increase the range of options available to ensure that living arrangements are age appropriate and that social, disability and health needs are met. The Commonwealth-State/Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA) Bilateral Agreement (2002–2007) commits the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments to work together to explore options for younger people placed in aged care facilities and the capacity to transfer individuals to more appropriate accommodation.

Other government initiatives that supports adults (18-65 years) with a disability to continue living in their homes and communities are the Adult Lifestyle Support Program and the Family Support Program for Adults. The Adult Lifestyle Support Program can be used flexibly to enable a person with a disability to live in their home, purchase necessary aids and equipment, manage their household and participate in their community. To be eligible for the Family Support Program for adults, the person must be living in the family home, need help with talking to other people, meeting other people or getting around. They must also need a service that is not available anywhere else.

On 10 February 2006, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) announced a new five-year program to reduce the number of young people with disabilities living in residential aged care services. The Queensland Government's contribution to this program over the five years will be \$23.87M. The program will:

- provide cost-effective alternative residential care services for some younger people with disabilities
- improve support services for those who continue to stay in residential aged care, and
- assist younger people who are at risk of entering residential aged care.

The program will initially target people under 50 years of age living in a residential aged care facilities or those younger people who are awaiting placement in a residential aged care facility, although people between the ages of 50-65 will also be eligible for the program.

In my capacity as Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors I have met with a number of community organisations to examine this issue. I expect to continue to work closely with a range of non-government organisations including Wesley Mission who is collaborating with Youngcare the organisation set up by David Conry (Shevaune Conry's husband) as the new program is developed and implemented over the next five years.