

## **Backgrounder**

### **The case for change**

People with disability in Australia are demanding change. In a recent study<sup>1</sup> Australia ranked almost at the bottom of the list of OECD countries across three measures; quality of life, poverty and employment opportunities for people with disability.

People with disability have traditionally been locked out of sight and out of mind in large congregate settings where their human rights have been systematically ignored.

This is now universally regarded as unacceptable and governments around the world at every level are seeking to redress this situation.

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* was signed by the Australian government in March 2007. Article 19<sup>2</sup> of the convention recognises that people with a disability have a right to live in the community. In upholding this right, state and territory governments in Australia have been slowly moving to redevelop large residential centres and support people with disability to become members of the community and live in a place of their choice.

In New South Wales the *Disability Services Act 1993* (DSA)<sup>3</sup> enshrines the UN Convention. A 2010 *NSW Ombudsman* report<sup>4</sup> to Parliament reaffirmed that the residential centres, also known as institutions, across the state are incapable of conforming to the DSA.

Many organisations such as the national peak disability rights and advocacy organisation, *People with Disability Australia Incorporated* (PWD) have pressured national and state governments through campaigns like Shut In<sup>5</sup> to take urgent action. They quite simply state that people with disability are being, “Shut In to institutions and Shut Out of the community. This is a human rights abuse and it has to end”.

The New South Wales government’s official advisory body, the *Disability Council of NSW* has stated that its recommendations on accommodation and support options for people with disability include an upper limit of no more than four people with disability residing together<sup>6</sup>.

The Council further states, “... it does not support the creation of smaller-scale congregate care centres, particularly where such services are developed on the site of existing large residential centres.”

The New South Wales Government, announced in 1998 that all residential centres would close by 2010. This included centres run by Ageing, Disability and Home Care and by funded community organisations.

This commitment was never realised by successive governments over the following decade.

The O'Farrell Government has revisited this commitment since coming to office and now commits to 2017/18<sup>7</sup> as the deadline for people with a disability to no longer be living in residential centres. It has plans currently underway for the closure of two ADHC owned and operated centres in western Sydney<sup>8</sup> and one in Orange.

There are a further 14 non-government operated residential centres discussing their redevelopment plans with the government.

Today, over 1000 people with disabilities in NSW continue to live in residential centres including 21 people at Crowle Home in Ryde, Sydney – owned and operated by Achieve Australia with government funding.

This is NSW Government policy. Achieve Australia is being supported by the government to put this policy into action by redeveloping the Crowle Home site. By leveraging its largest asset this community organisation will be able to transform itself, be less reliant on government funding and able to support increasing numbers of people with disability, including former Crowle Home residents, to live a meaningful and valued life as a member of the community.

**ENDS**

#### **About Achieve Australia**

Achieve Australia is a community based not-for-profit organisation operating across metropolitan Sydney. We support more than 550 people with disability across accommodation, employment and day programs throughout the community on the basis of achieving social inclusion.

**Enquiries – Nick Slater, Public Relations and Communications Adviser**

**Contact: 0415 492 970**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pwc.com.au/media-centre/2011/disability-in-australia-nov11.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=279>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/viewtop/inforce/act+3+1993+FIRST+0+N/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.pwd.org.au/systemic/shutin.html>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/publication/PDF/specialreport/SR\\_ClosureResidentialCentres\\_Aug10.pdf](http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/publication/PDF/specialreport/SR_ClosureResidentialCentres_Aug10.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.disabilitycouncil.nsw.gov.au/portfolios/accommodation/models.html>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/file/0014/234212/898\\_StrongerTogether\\_20102016\\_web\\_071211.pdf](http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0014/234212/898_StrongerTogether_20102016_web_071211.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/about\\_us/media\\_releases/ministerial/major\\_redevelopment\\_of\\_disability\\_accommodation\\_in\\_western\\_sydney](http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/about_us/media_releases/ministerial/major_redevelopment_of_disability_accommodation_in_western_sydney)