



THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN **COMMUNITY VISITOR SCHEME** **THE ADVOCATE**

4th EDITION May 2018

Personal safety of clients in care put in the spotlight by Community Visitor Scheme

Welcome to the fourth edition of **The Advocate**, the Community Visitor Scheme newsletter. The aim of this publication is to ensure our key stakeholders are kept informed of the significant issues, policy work and good news stories as a result of work done by the Community Visitor Scheme.

The Community Visitor Scheme was established in 2011, as a statutory body reporting to the Minister for Mental Health and the Minister for Disabilities, with the purpose of providing protection of the rights of people with a disability or mental illness.

It has been recognised both nationally and internationally that people with a disability and those with a mental illness are twice as likely to be physically and sexually abused than those without a disability. When individuals are dependent on personal care from others for all their intimate needs such as washing, toileting and dressing, they are going to be exposed to many individuals who provide this care.

While there are many precautions such as staff security checks, protective behavior training etc, there remains significant risks for these individuals. What's more, we know that those with pedophilic tendencies will target individuals with intellectual and communication impairments. That is why it is so important to have safeguards in place to act as 'watch-dogs' and that perpetrators also know that they are at greater risk of being 'found out'. To take these safeguards away would give a clear signal to not only those in need of care, but also to those who are looking for an easy target.

It is also noted that there is considerable evidence that many incidents of violence and abuse goes unreported and even when it is reported, it is very difficult to get a conviction. The South Australian Government has attempted to address this through the **SA Disability Justice Strategy** which includes changes to the *Evidence Act* and to also implement a program that recruits 'communication assistants' to assist with investigative interviews to ensure better outcomes for those with communication impairments.

Also, SA Health has implemented the policy, *Same Gender Accommodation Policy Directive*. This policy mandates that all patients staying overnight in a South Australian public hospital are to be placed in same gender accommodation, use same gender accommodation facilities, and are not required to move through mixed gender areas to reach their own facilities (except when considered clinically appropriate). However, clients have continued to raise feelings of being unsafe within mental health wards particularly when there are aggressive or highly vocal clients in the unit.

In response to this issue, SA Health has released the *Changing Behaviour Strategy* as they recognise that consumers, carers, volunteers and workers all want health services in which health care can be both delivered and received without personal threat or risk. It is acknowledged that clients with mental health issues (including substance abuse) experiencing clinical conditions, are more likely to present with challenging behaviours.

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SA Health has provided a policy directive and policy guidelines to provide personnel with procedures and tools to identify individuals who might have challenging behaviours and implement practices to manage the environmental or personal factors that might affect that individual.

During the months of May and June, Community Visitors will be focussing on the personal safety of clients in care and asking specific questions about how safe they feel, and if they have any personal safety concerns. Community Visitors will also be asking staff their view on the matter.

Data will be collated and reported back to the CVS Advisory Committee as well as Executives of facilities. Maurice Corcoran, Principal Community Visitor, will also report back to responsible Ministers on the findings.

The Community Visitor Scheme takes its responsibility of being a 'voice' for clients very seriously and sees the focus on the personal safety of clients in care, as a step forward in addressing not only their issues, but looking for solutions to any systemic barriers that may present. If you know of any or hear of residents in disability accommodation, Day Options, Supported Residential Facilities (SRFs) or mental health facilities who do not feel safe or have experienced abuse or neglect, we would like to hear from you. We can follow up on these concerns without identifying you and then can at least feel assured about safeguarding some of our most vulnerable South Australians who have a right to be safe!



**Interested in becoming a Community Visitor or know someone
who would be great in this role?**

Go to page 6 and visit the Community Visitor Scheme website at
www.communityvisitorscheme.sa.gov.au

Disability

Common concerns being raised by service providers

The Disability Coordinator has been meeting with numerous service providers to discuss outcomes from CVS visits and to provide valuable feedback. A number of concerns have been raised at these meetings which are summarised below:

- * delay in receiving back plans from the NDIA
- * transport – how will this be funded in the future with NDIS?
- * a housing provider not accepting nominations from clients who are not receiving a DSP
- * delays in filling vacancies in homes
- * implementation procedures for Supported Independent Living (SIL)
- * delay in accessing staff training due to funding changes
- * delay in receiving authorised access requests and information from DSA to assist at NDIS pre-planning meetings
- * support for clients who do not have family members/advocates to assist them through the process.

All of the above, plus more, is being monitored closely and the CVS will continue to provide updates as they come to hand.

Exciting opportunity for client on the Yorke Peninsula

Recently a young man living in supported accommodation on the Yorke Peninsula had an exciting opportunity when he was given a second-hand pushbike by one of our very generous Community Visitors.

At a CVS visit and inspection mid last year, Kim Steinle (CV) pictured below, observed the "bundle of energy" Lucas clearly had and heard how much he enjoyed riding a bike. Kim had an old bike at home in his shed and hoped the bike would provide some enjoyment to Lucas.

The bike was offered as an act of goodwill and at no cost. Full responsibility for the use of the bike and user remained with the service provider providing support. Recommendations regarding the wearing of a helmet, etc were forwarded with the bike.



Kim Steinle (CV) and Lucas (resident) on the day of the bike handover.



Mental Health

Visit from mental health consumer advocates from West Java

During January, the CVS office was visited by a group of 4 mental health consumer advocates all the way from West Java, through a fellowship with Flinders University. The visitors came from various roles within the mental health system in Indonesia and were in Adelaide to gain ideas about how they can strengthen their efforts in West Java. West Java has among the highest rates of Pasung (physical restraint in the home) for people with a mental illness.



We shared the history and functions of the CVS with the visitors and heard from them about their challenges in improving responses to people with mental health issues in West Java, where they have virtually no community health services and limited treatment options.

L-R Mr Gema Gumelar (from KPSI Bandung), John Alderdice (CVS), Prof Eimear Muir-Cochrane (Flinders University), Maurice Corcoran (CVS), Mrs Isti Chalifati Lazuarina (from BCI Bandung), Prof Sharon Law (Flinders University), Dr Lelly Resna Nugrahawati (Akeswari), Ms Nismah Qonitah (interpreter), Mr Muhamad Taufik Hidayat (West Java Psychiatric Hospital).

CVS visits to Community Mental Health Facilities

The CVS has now visited all inpatient community mental health facilities as part of the widened scope of the CVS. The CVS visits to the Intermediate Care Centres and Rehabilitation Centres have been welcomed by the centres and a number of emerging issues have already been identified during the visits including:

- high demand for beds and long waiting lists
- bed availability prevents centres from being able to offer a respite service as a form of early intervention
- there are a number of long stay clients with complex needs in the centres
- accommodation shortages in the community are affecting patient-flow and discharge plans.

Clients in the Community Mental Health centres have also shared their positive experiences and at a recent visit to an Intermediate Care Centre the clients shared *that they hope that there will be more Intermediate Care Centre facilities (ICCs), as they felt that it is extremely beneficial to their mental health and well being to have a supportive facility.*

Supported Residential Facilities & Day Options programs

The Supported Residential Facilities Association has been working closely with the Department for Human Services (previously DCSI) in developing new accommodation models which are compatible with NDIA requirements. A number of SRFs have become registered providers enabling provision of both accommodation and services under the NDIS – essentially being a ‘whole of life’ provider. Historically accommodation and support services are delivered by different providers. However, this expectation appears to have changed within the current climate.

The DHS have been reviewing the current SRF legislation and many organisations including the CVS, ShelterSA and Local Governments have been calling upon Government to undertake this review which hopefully will also include Rooming and Boarding Houses that have little or no regulations nor scrutiny. The CVS looks forward to being informed of the outcome and identifying the impact it will have on both SRF accommodation and more broadly, accommodation options of other vulnerable people – including boarding houses and homelessness support agencies.

Given the new funding models, a question has been raised with CVS regarding licencing and regulatory considerations, as currently undertaken by local government.

The CVS understands that to date 272 SRF residents have been assessed as eligible for the NDIS and that 72 plans have been approved. With a population group of approximately 766, clearly more assessments will be undertaken. The CVS also continues to monitor residents’ access to the NDIA assessment process and what support services will be available to those individuals not deemed eligible for NDIS. We are also concerned about the many mental health agencies who provide much needed case-management and early intervention programs for those in need of psycho-social support as has been raised by the Mental Health Coalition.

As the NDIS transition process continues, CVS reports have started to highlight particular issues as noted by the Day Options program providers. Under NDIS, clients will need to allow for transport costs from within their funding allocation. There is concern among some service providers and clients that available funding within individual NDIS Plans will not cover the actual transport costs currently being incurred. A further issue raised relates to inaccurate representation of a client’s support requirements in the plans resulting in inadequate funding provision. Providers claim that this has the potential to impact appropriate staffing levels and and therefore client safety.

The CVS is aware that some Day Options programs have already closed, or may close, and that this has the potential to particularly impact regional areas where alternative programs may not be available.

Facebook Update

If you haven’t already, ‘like’ our Facebook page for updates, stories and more.

[Community Visitor Scheme Facebook Page](#)



Recruitment & Training

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A COMMUNITY VISITOR?

Join a great team of Volunteers!

The Community Visitor Scheme is an independent statutory authority, which undertakes visits and inspections to mental health facilities, Emergency Departments of hospitals, disability accommodation, Supported Residential Facilities (SRFs) and Day Options programs.

If you are passionate about the rights of South Australians with a mental illness or a disability and want to improve the care and treatment provided to patients and residents, then this could be the right opportunity for you.

You will receive comprehensive training and reimbursement for out of pocket expenses.

While no formal qualifications are required, you will need:

- » good communication skills
- » an understanding of advocacy
- » to be able to show empathy for people living with mental illness and disability
- » to possess objective report writing skills
- » to be computer literate.

Access to a mobile phone and a computer is essential.

So join us for a rewarding experience, which will enhance your skills and broaden your knowledge of the mental health and disability sectors in SA.

For further information about the Scheme, please visit our website www.communityvisitorscheme.sa.gov.au

If you wish to apply to become a volunteer, please complete the application form, which can be found on our website, attaching a current resume. Please note, this position is not suitable for people working fulltime.



General News

Community Visitor Scheme launches new website!

The Community Visitor Scheme (CVS) is very pleased to have a brand new website for clients, workers, carers, families and potential volunteers to access.



The website is easy to navigate and contains information on how the CVS can provide [Advocacy and Assistance](#) to clients and families.

For those of you looking for brochures and resources, just go to the [Publications](#) page and you will be able to order online. You can also access our latest Annual Reports.

Becoming a volunteer with the CVS can provide gratifying work, as well as a healthy boost to self-confidence and personal growth. Go to the [Volunteering with us](#) page to apply online.

All this and more can be found at www.communityvisitorscheme.sa.gov.au

National Volunteers Parade – 21 May 2018

On a crisp and cloudy Adelaide day, close to 1,000 volunteers representing 60 agencies marched from the Torrens Parade grounds to Victoria Square to celebrate National Volunteers week....and the Community Visitor Scheme was there!



Kim Steinle (CV), Lindy Thai (CV), Leanne Rana (Recruitment and Training Officer), Kate Thomas (Mental Health Coordinator) and Maurice Corcoran (Principal Community Visitor)

Although we were a small group, it was important for the CVS to be participating and supporting our volunteers as well as the work of many other volunteer agencies.

The importance of volunteering to the community cannot be underestimated, both for the many hours of service volunteers give to their communities, as well as the health and wellbeing benefits volunteering brings to those who participate in volunteering.

Thank you to Kim, Lindy, Kate, Maurice and Leanne for 'flying the flag' for the CVS.....hope to see you all there next year!

Information about volunteering

36.2% of Australians participate in formal volunteering (6.1 million people)

In 2010, formal volunteering (excluding travel) was worth \$25.4 billion to the Australian economy, informal volunteering was worth \$59.3 billion.

Helpful Information

REQUESTED VISITS

Individuals, their families, other key people involved in a person's life or service providers can, on their behalf, contact the Community Visitor Scheme office to request an individual visit or support with advocacy.

This requested visit may be managed through a phone discussion or may result in one of the Community Visitors attending in person to talk through the issues they are having.

It is optimal that the individual's consent has been sought or contact details are provided to enable communication with them for consent to a CVS visit or advocacy on their behalf.

However, it is recognised that at times people express concern about the potential for retribution when individuals raise issues about their standard of care or accommodation and therefore may want to remain anonymous. In these situations, CVS will discuss and explore avenues as to how issues could be investigated with non-disclosure of individual names.

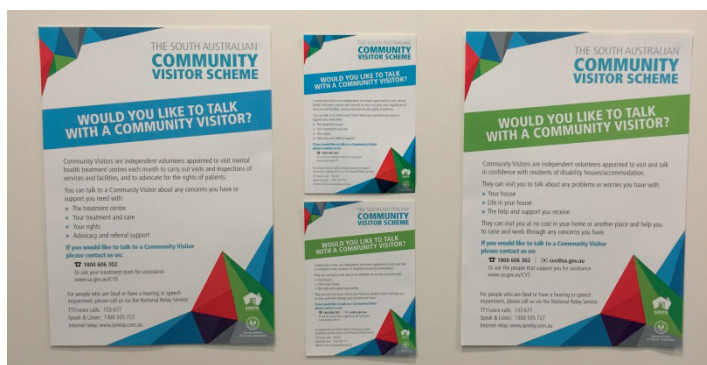
Please call CVS on 1800 606 302 and you will be referred to the appropriate coordinator to assist with your concerns.

PROMOTING THE COMMUNITY VISITOR SCHEME

Need more brochures? The Community Visitor Scheme is always happy to supply your facility with more brochures as required. Trifold (DL) pamphlets, A5 flyers, A4 and A3 Posters are available for both Mental Health and Disability.

We are also available to present updates to staff of mental health and disability organisations, as well as speaking to community groups about the CVS. Contact us to arrange a time.

Please contact the office on 1800 606 302 or email cvs@sa.gov.au



A3 & A5 Mental Health and Disability Posters



A4 and Trifold (DL) Pamphlets available from the CVS office

Want additional copies of this publication, or would like to be updated with future publications?
Join our mailing list by contacting the office of 1800 606 302 or emailing cvs@sa.gov.au

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**Government
of South Australia**

Department of Human Services