

The SRS Supporting Accommodation for Vulnerable Victorians Initiative

Creating a stronger foundation for pension-level SRS



What is the SRS Supporting Accommodation for Vulnerable Victorians Initiative?

The Victorian Government is establishing a new initiative to provide for the needs of vulnerable Victorians, through assistance to support the viability and sustainability of the *pension-level* Supported Residential Services (SRS) sector.

Pension-level SRS are privately operated facilities that provide accommodation and personal or special care for people with psychiatric disability, frail older people and other vulnerable Victorians who need support in daily living. They are licensed and regulated by the Department of Human Services (DHS) but do not receive direct Government subsidies. Residents within this sector are amongst Victoria's most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens.

The SRS *Supporting Accommodation for Vulnerable Victorians* Initiative provides a package of measures designed to create a stronger foundation for *pension-level* SRS to improve their viability and meet the increasingly complex support needs of their residents.

The Initiative will be rolled out over two financial years with full implementation from 2008-09, and will improve the viability of *pension-level* SRS operations and the quality of life of residents through:

- **Indirect facility cost relief.** Non-government service providers (NGOs) will be contracted to manage facility cost relief funding for a cluster of *pension-level* SRS. The NGO will develop *negotiated contracts* with *pension-level* SRS detailing agreed costs, up to a maximum amount, to benefit both viability of the facility and residents as a group. Funding may be negotiated to address costs associated with an individual resident but is not tied to individual residents in the way an individual care package would be.

By improving the viability of eligible *pension-level* SRS, this measure will assist continued provision of stable and affordable supported accommodation for approximately 2,000 vulnerable residents. It will also improve the connection of these SRS and residents to their local service networks.

Indirect facility cost relief will commence late 2006-07.

How do I find out more information?

If you would like more information about the SRS Supporting Accommodation for Vulnerable Victorians Initiative or about the SRS sector in Victoria in general, please visit our website:

www.health.vic.gov.au/srs

Or you can phone either the SRS Program based in your DHS region (contact details available on the above website) or the SRS Supporting Accommodation for Vulnerable Victorians Project Team based in the SRS Unit at DHS, Melbourne, on **03 9096 7787** or **03 9096 6933**

- **Health and social assessment of residents.** These assessments will build knowledge of the nature of resident complexity and support needs within *pension-level* SRS in order to inform planning and implementation of the initiative. They will also promote better access to social, health and community services for residents.

Appropriate service providers will be contracted to undertake the assessments, which will commence in the second year (2007-08) of the Initiative.

- **Service coordination and support services.** NGO service providers will be funded to work with proprietors and health and community services to enhance and coordinate supports and services to *pension-level* SRS residents. They will also facilitate social support and activities to reduce resident isolation, and assist service access for particularly vulnerable residents.

These services will start up mid 2007-08 and will be targeted to larger *pension-level* SRS or those that have a high number of residents with a psychiatric disability or difficult behaviours.

The Initiative will also explore targeted options to improve *pension-level* SRS building fabric/residents' physical living environment and safety. Such options would not start up until after July 2008.

Who will benefit from the Initiative?

The Initiative will benefit *pension-level* SRS and their residents. For the Initiative, a *pension-level* SRS is defined as an SRS that charges no more than full pension plus Commonwealth rental assistance for 80% to 100% of its beds.

Benefits for residents will include:

- Less risk of their SRS closing and the possibility they will be forced to move or become homeless
- Proprietors will have more capacity to meet their day-to-day support needs
- Improved access to health and community services
- More opportunities for social activity and participation
- Improved living environment

Why is the Government funding this Initiative?

The *pension-level* SRS sector is a large and important supplier of affordable supported housing for people with psychiatric and other disabilities and frail older people who need accommodation and support with daily living.

The *pension-level* SRS sector has been in decline for the last decade resulting in a significant loss of available beds. Low viability, linked to limited fee revenue and an increasingly complex resident group, has been an important factor in this decline.

The Initiative will create a stronger foundation for *pension-level* SRS to improve their viability and meet the care needs of residents.

How does a *pension-level* SRS receive and manage the funding?

DHS will contract appropriate NGO service providers to manage facility cost relief funding for a cluster of eligible *pension-level* SRS, or to directly provide assessment and service coordination and support services. Service providers managing facility cost relief funding will develop *negotiated contracts* with the SRS to ensure this funding is spent in accordance with Initiative aims and guidelines.

DHS will establish a process to determine eligibility of individual *pension-level* SRS and invite them to participate in the Initiative. SRS accepting this invitation will agree to work collaboratively with their service provider and meet specified accountability requirements.

The partnering of *pension-level* SRS with NGO service providers will strengthen accountability to the community and improve connection of these SRS and residents to their local service networks.