

# Supported Residential Facilities

## Vulnerable and Disadvantaged

Supported Residential Facilities (SRFs) are accommodation services licensed under the *Supported Residential Facilities Act 1992* to provide accommodation and personal care to their residents.

The *Supported Residential Facilities Act* defines a SRF as: *a premises at which, for monetary or other consideration (but whether or not for profit), residential accommodation is provided or offered together with personal care services (other than for members of the immediate family of the proprietor of the facility).*<sup>1</sup>

Personal care is defined in the Act as including:

- ◆ nursing care
- ◆ assistance or supervision in bathing, showering or personal hygiene toileting or continence management; dressing or undressing; or consuming food
- ◆ direct physical assistance to a person with mobility problems
- ◆ management (or assistance with the management) of medication
- ◆ substantial rehabilitative or developmental assistance, or
- ◆ management of personal finances.<sup>2</sup>

*People living in Supported Residential Facilities are a highly vulnerable and disadvantaged group who are not receiving care which meets current policy and standards. On the whole, residents have impaired cognitive ability, little power to choose where or how they live, few supports, receive few services and have a greatly reduced ability to protect themselves from exploitation or harm. Lack of income and minimal family support adds to the general impoverishment of their circumstances and lifestyle. Despite having few resources and significant disabilities, residents do not receive a targeted and coordinated response, and there are minimal mechanisms to plan for and protect the interests of the residents.*<sup>3</sup>

## SNAPSHOT 11

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# Supported Residential Facilities

## Number of People Living in SRFs

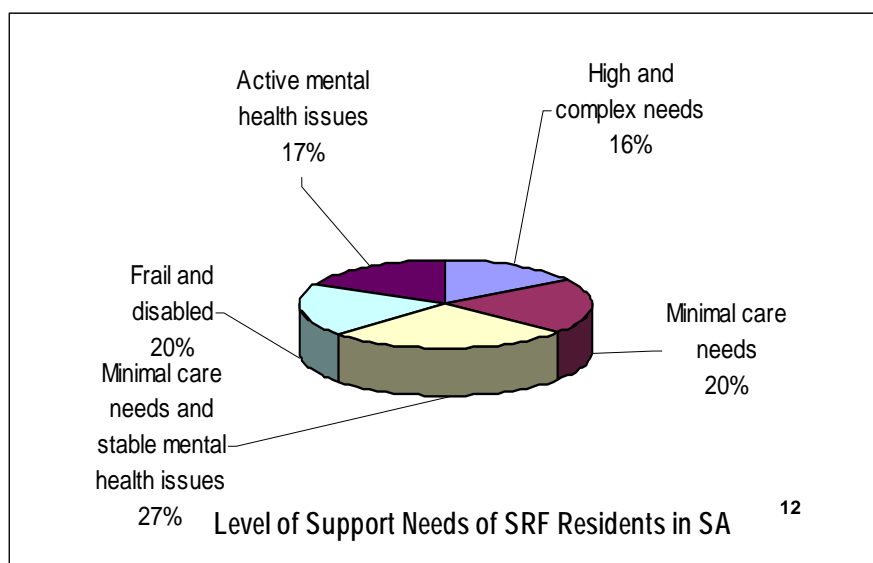
As of September 2002, there were 65 Supported Residential Facilities licensed by local government and operating throughout the state, including a number of retirement villages that are licensed as Supported Residential Facilities. 48 of the 65 facilities cater for individuals whose only source of income is a pension or benefit and who pay the majority of their income to the facility for their ongoing care. These facilities are referred to as 'pension only'. There are 1,300-1,500 people living in pension-only SRFs in South Australia. The other type of SRFs are facilities that are generally of a higher amenity, where residents usually pay an entrance fee and have the capacity to pay for a higher standard of care. <sup>4</sup>

Note: The information in the remainder of this publication refers to 'pension only' Supported Residential Facilities.

## Characteristics of SRF Residents

The following figures are based on research conducted by the Department of Human Services in 2002:

- ◆ The majority of SRF residents are male (63% male, 37% female). <sup>5</sup>
- ◆ 4% of residents were aged less than 25 years, 18% aged 26-40 years, 38% 41-65 years, 14% aged 65-75 years and 26% over 75 years. <sup>6</sup>
- ◆ Mental illness was the predominant primary disability of residents (54%), followed by age-related disability (23%), intellectually disability (11%) and brain injury (9%). (Note: this is based on assessment by owners/managers). <sup>7</sup>
- ◆ Residents varied in the type of support they require and the complexity of their needs. Assessments indicate that most required at least two hours of support per day, and over 25% required more than four hours. <sup>8</sup>
- ◆ Approximately 50% of residents were subject to administrative orders where their finances were managed by the Public Trustee or another person. <sup>9</sup>

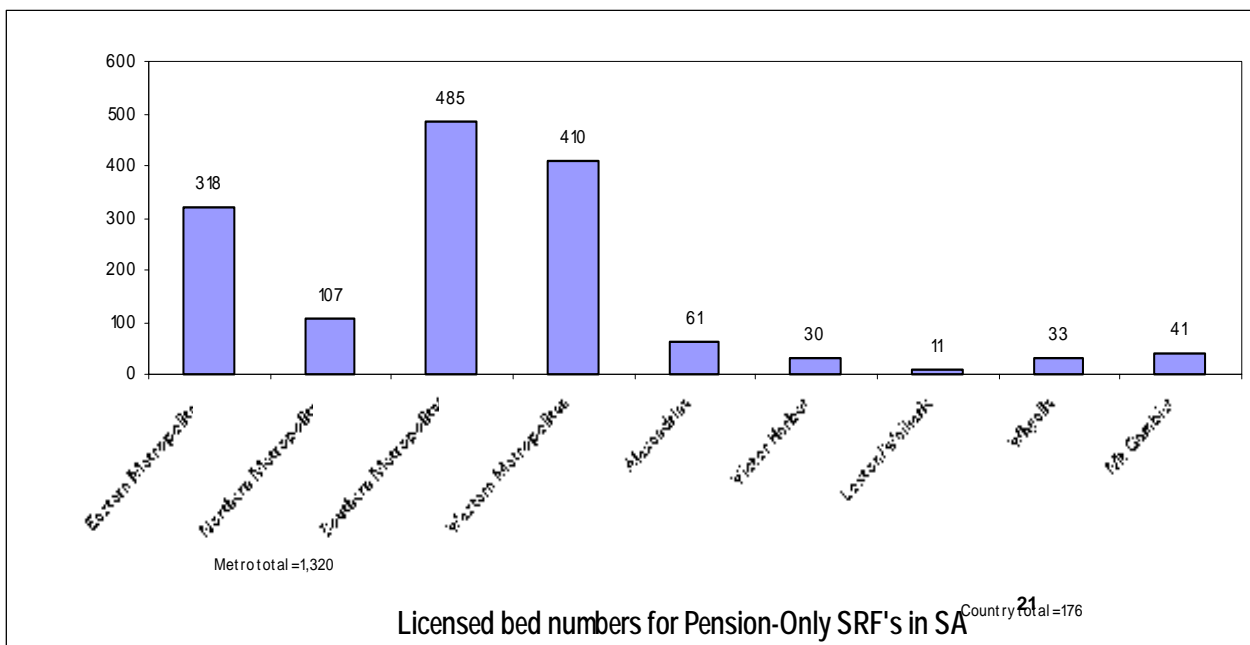


- 36% of residents had lived in their present facility for under 2 years, 55% for 2-10 years, and a further 9% for more than 10 years. <sup>10</sup>
- 66% had lived in congregate or institutional care (usually another SRF) prior to living in their present facility. <sup>11</sup>

# Supported Residential Facilities

## Characteristics of SRFs

- ◆ SRFs typically operate in older buildings that were formerly large private residential homes or former residential / institutional facilities. <sup>13</sup>
- ◆ Facilities range in size from 4 residents to 64 residents, with an average of 27.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ More than half of the residents share their room with at least one other person.<sup>15</sup>
- ◆ Most facilities cater for a mix of residents of both genders and of varying ages and disabilities.<sup>16</sup>
- ◆ 42 of the 48 pension-only SRFs operate on a private-for-profit basis. As of September 2003, the majority of these received no government subsidy; 8 private-for-profit facilities received a Board and Care subsidy through mental health services for some or all of their residents. Thus residents have in the main funded their own care, and were *outside the range of funding to disability and aged services... their self-funding of their own care is an anomaly.* (Refer to page 6, *Recent Government Initiatives*, for an update.)<sup>17</sup>
- ◆ SRFs are generally private, family-operated businesses. Staffing levels, qualifications and professional backgrounds of managers vary considerably, with no consistency across the sector.<sup>18</sup>
- ◆ Most SRF proprietors are concerned about the financial viability of their facility, indicating rising costs and a falling profit margin, with income largely fixed. Increasing property value is another reason for the declining number of SRFs, as selling them for residential development becomes more profitable. <sup>19</sup>
- ◆ *SRF Association data indicates that over the past five years the number of beds in SRFs has declined by about 4% per year and 12% in the past three years. In the past 3 years, 6 licensed private sector SRFs, providing 184 beds, have closed. A number of SRFs are expected to close within the next 2 years, including 8 facilities that accommodate 304 clients....While facilities are often far from ideal, closure is often traumatic for residents.* <sup>20</sup>
- ◆ The Seniors Information Service maintains a database of all SRFs, as well as information about available vacancies. (Visit: [www.seniors.asn.au/Aged Care Services/SupportedResidential.htm](http://www.seniors.asn.au/Aged_Care_Services/SupportedResidential.htm) for details).



# Supported Residential Facilities

## Legislation Regarding SRFs

The *Supported Residential Facilities Act 1992* mandates residents' rights to:

- ◆ high quality care, including choice of medical practitioner.
- ◆ reasonable levels of nutrition, comfort and shelter in a home-like environment.
- ◆ a safe physical environment.
- ◆ dignity, respect and a reasonable degree of privacy.
- ◆ independence and freedom of choice.
- ◆ management of their own affairs as much as possible.
- ◆ choice about the provision of accommodation or personal care services. <sup>22</sup>

The Local Council's role includes:

- ◆ administration and enforcement of the *Supported Residential Facilities Act*.
- ◆ responsibility for licensing and inspecting facilities.
- ◆ receiving complaints about facilities and other residents.
- ◆ providing information on dispute resolution. <sup>23</sup>

The adequacy of the current regulatory regime is questioned in the DHS report, *A Place to Call Home*. The absence of mechanisms to protect the interests of residents, whether that be via key workers or an independent consumer advocacy and protection role (such as Official Visitors) which now exist in other jurisdictions, was also noted. <sup>24</sup>

## Comments from the DHS Report, "Somewhere to Call Home"

- ◆ *The (SRF) model that appears to have evolved by default, where private facilities meet the 'whole of life' needs of the people living in their facility, on a 'for profit' basis, in a semi-institutionalised environment, with few professional supports and with care entirely self-funded, is inherently flawed.* <sup>25</sup>
- ◆ *The approximately 1,500 residents of SRFs have largely been a 'hidden' group to the South Australian community, living in facilities which many do not know exist. They have also arguably been hidden in relation to service policy, planning and delivery, and thus have failed to benefit from reforms and advances in supported accommodation, disability and mental health.* <sup>26</sup>
- ◆ *There is really just one main overwhelming finding from this study—that people living in SRFs are a highly vulnerable and disadvantaged group who are not receiving care which meets current policy and standards.... The research indicates that model of supported accommodation fails to meet a range of disability standards, principles and expectations in relation to privacy, dignity, consumer choice and decision making, community participation, independence, rehabilitation, skill development, housing quality and health care.* <sup>27</sup>

# Supported Residential Facilities

## Current Issues

Some of the concerns regarding SRFs that were presented during the *Parliamentary Inquiry into Supported Accommodation* (November 2003) were in relation to:

- ◆ **Quality and level of personal care provided:**

Of particular concern was the administration of medication by SRF proprietors and the lack of quality assurance and safeguards in this area.<sup>28</sup>

- ◆ **Access to external services:**

Many residents of SRFs are not able to access necessary case management and community based services. During the inquiry *it was frequently suggested that the provision of support services by an external agency offers greater protection to residents from potential profiteering and exploitation, as well as improved community integration and quality of life for residents.*<sup>29</sup>

- ◆ **Access to Aged Care Assessment and Placements for Elderly Residents:**

Approximately a third of all SRF residents in South Australia are eligible for Commonwealth aged care and accommodation services but currently do not have access to them.<sup>30</sup>

- ◆ **The physical environment, including lack of privacy:**

A number of SRFs failed to comply with the *Supported Residential Facilities Act* in terms of providing a 'home-like' environment and aspects of privacy, personal dignity and safety.<sup>31</sup>

- ◆ **High costs to residents:**

The high proportion of income paid by residents of 'pension-only' SRFs leaves most residents with little money to purchase or access external services, including recreational activities.<sup>32</sup>

- ◆ **Social Isolation:**

*Residents had little or no access to programs which could provide them with meaningful activity, rehabilitation, skill development, social opportunities and the chance to participate in activities outside of the facility and engage in the wider community.*<sup>33</sup>

- ◆ **Vulnerability to exploitation and abuse:**

*There was a general consensus in evidence that the lack of monitoring of standards of care in SRFs and the variability of management styles, skills and attitudes can leave residents, already vulnerable due to mental illness and disability, vulnerable to financial and other exploitation and abuse.*<sup>34</sup>

- ◆ **A lack of any complaints mechanism:**

Under the *Supported Residential Facilities Act* residents can lodge a complaint to the licensing authority (e.g. local council). However, many residents lack the skills and confidence to lodge a complaint without advocacy, and are also fearful of being 'punished' or losing their accommodation. Some residents reported being punished through denial of telephone access, denial of meals or more restricted access to visitors.<sup>35</sup>

- ◆ **Evidence of some "institutional" practices:**

Aspects symptomatic of institutional-style care reported include: running to strict schedules, such as dinner being served only at 4 pm; curfews; accommodation and personal care being provided by a single agency; and few avenues for residents to complain or seek improvements.<sup>36</sup>

# Supported Residential Facilities

## Recent Government Initiatives

### \$11.4 MILLION PACKAGE TO SUPPORT SRF RESIDENTS

In November, 2003, the State Government approved a \$11.4 million package and comprehensive strategy to support the needs of 1,200 vulnerable people in Supported Residential Facilities.<sup>37</sup>

*The funding has two components. Firstly, a sustainment package for SRFs of \$3.84 million for 2003-04 which includes an annual board and care subsidy of \$2,062 for all licensed SRF residents, as well as targeted support services provided by the non-government sector for high-needs residents.*

*Secondly, a closure response of \$6.34 million for 2003-04 aimed at slowing down the rate of closures until long-term reforms can be put in place. It is a transitional arrangement for residents who may otherwise become homeless. It includes strategies such as resident assessment and development of alternative support and accommodation options. The Government's longer-term strategy will incorporate a review of the Supported Residential Facilities Act 1992 and strengthening consumer protection measures.<sup>38</sup>*

### SRF MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED

In April 2003, the SRF Ministerial Advisory Committee, chaired by Professor Eleanor Ramsay, met for the first time, and continues to meet on an on-going basis. The Committee will consider a review of the *SRF Act* and broader reform of the SRF sector in response to the *Somewhere to Call Home* report (DHS), including the areas of:

- ◆ Support services for residents
- ◆ Support for the SRF landlord functions
- ◆ Government policy to support the reform process
- ◆ Review of the *Supported Residential Facilities Act 1992* and other relevant legislation.<sup>39</sup>

#### Footnotes

1. *Supported Residential Facilities Act 1992*, Section 3
2. *Ibid*, Section 3
3. Doyle, M; Hume, A; McAvaney, J; Rogers, N; Stephenson, T. *Somewhere to Call Home. Supported Residential Facilities: the sector, its clientele and its future*, DHS (SA) 2003, p.7
4. *Ibid*, p.1
5. *Ibid*, p.40
6. *Ibid*, p.41
7. *Ibid*, p.40
8. *Ibid*, p.46-49
9. *Ibid*, p.43
10. *Ibid*, p.43
11. *Ibid*, p.5
12. *Ibid*, p.2
13. *Ibid*, p.5
14. *Ibid*, p.1
15. *Ibid*, p.5
16. *Ibid*, p.5
17. *Ibid*, p.2,102
18. *Ibid*, p.85
19. *Ibid*, p.83-85
20. *18th Report of the Social Development Committee*, 2003, p.111
21. *Ibid*, p.98
22. *Supported Residential Facilities Act 1992*, Section 3.
23. Seniors Information Service fact sheet: *SRFs*
24. *Somewhere to Call Home. Supported Residential Facilities: the sector, its clientele and its future*, DHS (SA) 2003, p.8
25. *Ibid*, p.7
26. *Ibid*, p.8
27. *Ibid*, p.99
28. *18th Report of the Social Development Committee*, 2003, p.103
29. *Ibid*, p.104
30. *Ibid*, p.105
31. *Ibid*, p.106
32. *Ibid*, p.106-107
33. *Somewhere to Call Home. Supported Residential Facilities: the sector, its clientele and its future*, DHS (SA) 2003, p.87
34. *18th Report of the Social Development Committee*, 2003, p. 108
35. *Ibid*, p.109
36. *Ibid*, p.110
37. *Headlines*, Issue 2, 2003, p.7
38. *Ibid*, p.7
39. *18th Report of the Social Development Committee*, p.113

# Supported Residential Facilities

## Shelter SA Position Statement 11 Supported Residential Facilities

- 11.1 Shelter SA supports increased funding to ensure Supported Residential Facilities are able to provide adequate supports and stable long-term accommodation options.
- 11.2 Shelter SA believes that adequate funding should be provided to ensure those placed in Supported Residential Facilities by deinstitutionalisation are adequately cared for and supported.
- 11.3 Shelter SA supports changes to the Supported Residential Facilities Act 1992, to ensure that:
- Residents are regularly assessed to ensure that they are appropriately placed,
  - Authorised Officers receive adequate training,
  - There is a minimum ratio of staff to residents, and
  - Residents' rights to privacy are specifically addressed.
- 11.4 Shelter SA supports the establishment of formal mechanisms to safeguard and advocate for the interests of residents.
- 11.5 Shelter SA believes that the issues highlighted in the SA Department of Human Services paper, "*Somewhere to Call Home: Supported Residential Facilities: The Sector, Its Clientele and its Future*" should be addressed by the State Housing Plan, so that the quality and standards of Supported Residential Facilities are improved.
- 11.6 Shelter SA calls for the establishment and monitoring of minimum standards for Supported Residential Facilities. It is acknowledged that such standards may put further pressure on to owners of Supported Residential Facilities, and therefore Shelter SA recommends that grants or interest free loans be made available to assist owners to improve the standards of their Supported Residential Facilities.
- 11.7 Shelter SA believes that where Supported Residential Facilities do close, there should be a coordinated response to prevent residents from experiencing primary or secondary homelessness.



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# Supported Residential Facilities

## References and Further Information

*A Snapshot of Supported Residential Facilities and their Residents in South Australia.\**  
(Supported Residential Facilities Association of South Australia, undated).

*Eighteenth Report of the Social Development Committee, Inquiry into Supported Accommodation\**  
(Parliament of SA, Nov. 2003).

Available at: [www.parliament.sa.gov.au/committees/lccdocuments/SD/public\\_documents/Tabled%20Reports/18th%20Report;%20Supported%20Accommodation%20Inquiry.pdf](http://www.parliament.sa.gov.au/committees/lccdocuments/SD/public_documents/Tabled%20Reports/18th%20Report;%20Supported%20Accommodation%20Inquiry.pdf)

*Financial Analysis of Supported Residential Facilities in South Australia.*

(Hunter, M; Marquette, L; SA Department of Human Services, April 2003).

Available at: [www.dhs.sa.gov.au/documents/publications/SRFFinAnalysis2403.pdf](http://www.dhs.sa.gov.au/documents/publications/SRFFinAnalysis2403.pdf)

*Headlines.* (Mental Health Coalition of SA and SACOSS Mental Health Newsletter, Issue 2, 2003).

Available at: [www.sacoss.org.au/projects/mh/news/dec03.pdf](http://www.sacoss.org.au/projects/mh/news/dec03.pdf)

*Housing Options for Older People: A Discussion Paper\*.*

(Guster, L; Shelter SA, Nov. 2002). Available at: [www.sheltersa.asn.au](http://www.sheltersa.asn.au)

*Life on Two Dollars a Day:*

*Inquiry into Supported Accommodation Options for People with Disabilities.\**

(Submission to the Social Development Committee, Parliament of SA, by Disability Action Inc., 2003).

*Major Reform Package for Supported Residential Facilities.\**

(Minister for Housing, Stephanie Key, Nov. 2003).

Available at: [www.ministers.sa.gov.au/Minister/MediaFrame.asp?article=2169&MinisterID=11](http://www.ministers.sa.gov.au/Minister/MediaFrame.asp?article=2169&MinisterID=11)

*SACOSS Submission to the Social Development Committee of the SA Parliament for the Inquiry into Supported Accommodation.* Available at: [www.sacoss.org.au/pubs/supa.pdf](http://www.sacoss.org.au/pubs/supa.pdf)

*SA Minister leads National Reform Process for Boarding Houses and Supported Residential Facilities*

Available at: [www.ministers.sa.gov.au/Minister/MediaFrame.asp?article=2350&MinisterID=11](http://www.ministers.sa.gov.au/Minister/MediaFrame.asp?article=2350&MinisterID=11)

*Seniors Information Service.* Telephone: 82321441. Address: 45 Flinders St., Adelaide.

- ◆ Information sheet on SRFs.
  - ◆ Complete list of SRFs in SA and database of current vacancies for SRFs in SA.
- Available at: [www.seniors.asn.au/Aged\\_Care\\_Services/SupportedResidential.htm](http://www.seniors.asn.au/Aged_Care_Services/SupportedResidential.htm)

*Somewhere to call Home: Supported Residential Facilities: The Sector, Its Clientele and Its Future.\**

(Doyle, M; Hume, A; McAvaney, J; Rogers, N; Stephenson, T; SA Department of Human Services, 2003).

Available at: [www.dhs.gov.au/documents/publications/Somewhere to call home.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov.au/documents/publications/Somewhere_to_call_home.pdf)

*Supported Residential Facilities Act (1992).\**

Available at: [www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/sa/consol\\_act/srfa1992334/s3.html](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/sa/consol_act/srfa1992334/s3.html)

(\* denotes that this reference is available in the Shelter SA library).

