Media release

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Regulator revokes a Support Residential Service registration

The Supported Residential Services (SRS) sector, which cares for 4,000 Victorians with disability, has been placed on notice by the Human Services Regulator after it revoked the registration of Gracemanor in Melbourne’s West.

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Secretary Brigid Sunderland said the Regulator had taken the action to protect the health and wellbeing of residents at the facility. It followed an extensive investigation that uncovered 27 serious contraventions of the Supported Residential Services (Private Proprietors) Act 2010.

“The Regulator moved with absolute determination to protect the welfare of residents following its investigation,” Ms Sunderland said.

“Today we put the sector on notice – the Regulator is actively monitoring the provision of services and will take the strongest possible action when residents are subjected to abuse and neglect.”

Evidence in the investigation included affidavits signed by current and former employees, residents and their families, and allied health workers, compliance breaches, and a forensic examination of records which identified instances of:

* bullying, intimidation, coercion and abuse of residents
* unsafe, unhygienic and uninhabitable living conditions
* insufficient quality and quantity of food
* inadequate provision of personal and health care
* improper storage and provision of medications
* hindering access to NDIS and health services
* opening private mail and forging resident’s signatures
* failing to keep and falsifying records and incident reports
* insufficient staffing and other compliance failures
* obstructing communications between residents, their family members and appointed guardians
* accepting residents unsuited to live in an SRS, resulting in an inappropriate and unsafe mix of residents
* information showing the service is not financially viable to continue operating.

The Regulator also determined the proprietor does not have the relevant skills and knowledge to operate an SRS in a competent and safe manner and is not suitable to operate an SRS on conduct and character grounds.

Deregistration follows the appointment of administrators for the facility in January.

The administrator, Ernst and Young, will continue to be responsible for the operation of the service until all residents at the facility have been supported to transition to alternate accommodation that best suits their needs.

There are 117 privately operated Supported Residential Services in Victoria. The facilities provide services to highly vulnerable members of the Victorian community. Last year, the Regulator conducted 158 inspections and issued 110 compliance notices to 24 services.

The Victorian Government is further strengthening protections for SRS residents by establishing a new social services regulator. New, stronger powers will mean the independent regulator has more tools to act when providers are not doing the right thing by their clients.

The Regulator calls on the community to support its regulatory oversight of services by reporting any concerns about the operation of Supported Residential Services to srs@dffh.vic.gov.au.

Media contact: Dave Bell | dave.bell@dffh.vic.gov.au | 1300 151 882