

9th May 2017

Update on the Complaint Regarding Aspect Services at Heatherton

Aspect released a statement on our website in September 2016 regarding a complaint from a former employee concerning a wooden structure that was being assembled at the Heatherton site in Victoria in early 2015. As soon as the senior management of Aspect had learnt of the structure's existence, it was dismantled. It was never used to restrain people.

At the time of our statement last year the following investigations had been completed with none of the allegations raised in the complaint sustained. They included:

1. Two investigations by Worksafe Victoria
2. An investigation by the Victoria Police
3. Two external independent audits, completed by Best Practice Certification Services to satisfy our compliance with DHHS Standards
4. An audit of our government authorised restricted practices by the Victorian Office of Professional Practice
5. Independent investigations by DHHS through their Mandatory Quality of Support Review process.

The Disability Services Commissioner (DSC) had begun an investigation in July 2015 into the complaint but had suspended this whilst the Victoria Police was conducting their investigation. Aspect has now received advice from the DSC following the completion of their investigation.

The DSC stated there was no evidence to suggest that the wooden structure was ever used to restrain people. Employees who were building the wooden structure stated that it was for voluntary use as a 'safe, quiet space' for adults on the spectrum to access of their own choice however, the construction of a structure such as this was not consistent with Aspect's practice.

The DSC found that the complaint was justified due to deficiencies in certain processes and procedures at Heatherton in 2015, namely:

- Aspect failed to report the existence and proposed use of a wooden box like structure in accordance with Victorian requirements.
- Three Behaviour Support Plans which were reviewed were found to be lacking in both detail and positive behaviour support strategies. The DSC's

assessment was that staff at the time did not have adequate understanding of client support needs.

- At the time of the complaint, some of the service practices in relation to reporting incidents at the Heatherton site were deficient.

The concern in the complaint regarding workplace culture was not justified. The DSC found that staff displayed a respectful and person-centred approach toward clients.

The DSC also noted that when the complaint was made in 2015, Aspect had only recently taken over the Heatherton site from Alpha Autism.

The DSC acknowledges that over the past two years Aspect has put in place significant measures to address these concerns including:

- A specialist restricted interventions panel, responsible for the review and approval of all proposed restricted interventions additional to the requirements under the Act.
- The elimination of all casual agency staff in service delivery roles
- Training in positive behaviour support, crisis intervention and incident reporting
- Implementation of RiskMan and Carelink software systems
- Establishment of a specialist behaviour support team.

We sincerely hope that through this process Aspect has demonstrated that we take complaints seriously. We are committed to ensuring the people we work with receive respectful and high quality support to achieve their goals and aspirations.

We apologise for the impact this matter has had on the people we support and their families and we appreciate the ongoing support of the community.



Adrian Ford
Chief Executive Officer

