

18 October 2011

CROWLE HOME REDEVELOPMENT - THE FACTS

Achieve Australia would like to respond to the letters published in the *Northern District Times* as part of the public consultation over the proposed redevelopment of the Crowle Home site. It is encouraging to see such concern expressed for the people we support at Achieve Australia, so it might be helpful for me to share some of the story.

Achieve Australia is striving to create and secure opportunities for people with disability today, tomorrow and for the future.

Crowle Home has been the home of people with disability for nearly 60 years and the dormitory style model to house people we support is well and truly outdated.

Crowle Home is also marked by rundown grounds, housing and facilities. The new development will contain lots of open green spaces, modern buildings and will maintain the heritage 'Tellaraga' house and memorial gardens.

Our belief is that people with disability should be able to live in the community and participate in the social, cultural, religious, recreational and sporting life within that community. This is called social inclusion and it is a departure from the way we did things in the 1950s/60s/70s. Social inclusion is now Federal and State government policy.

Stronger Together 2 is the \$2bn NSW government investment into the disability sector to aid social inclusion. It features the policy of closing all Large Residential Centres (LRC) across NSW by 2017/18. This means that Crowle Home will cease to exist as a LRC regardless of the outcome of this current process.

We have been moving residents of Crowle into the community for nearly 20 years. For many ex-residents, the chance to live in their own home with friends is a dream come true. For the majority, the transition into community living is a very exciting time and life changing.

The move creates opportunities to develop new relationships with people within the wider community, as well as maintain old relationships with friends, colleagues and Achieve Australia staff. Many family members notice a positive difference when visiting their siblings, sons and daughters in their own home, with a number of families reporting notable changes in people's emotional well-being, confidence and communication within weeks of relocating.

One letter writer suggested that we have gone into the real estate business. Not so - the whole point of the Crowle Home redevelopment is to make profits to be poured straight back into the organisation in order to fund important projects and serve those who count most – people with disability.

We are doing this project for all the right reasons.

Achieve Australia aims to become a community business (instead of being heavily dependent on government funding) and our interests are in securing the future for the people we support; with their individual needs being our number one priority.

Achieve Australia has been asset-rich and cash-poor. This project will deliver a range of benefits and allow us to widen our range of services, including accommodation, for the 550 people we support. Our intent is to become less dependent on rentals and increase the ownership of our properties. We are moving towards 'purpose built' properties that are specially designed to meet the needs of people we support.

The end result will be beneficial, allowing people with disability to grow and have access to better services. It gives people better choices.

The new development, to be called 'Crowle Gardens', honours the bequest made by the Crowle family in 1952 by continuing to benefit people with disability.

As we adapt to changing times and implement government policy, we remain focused on delivering on the rights of people with disability to achieve a meaningful and valued life.

Anne Bryce
Chief Executive Officer
Achieve Australia