

The background is a solid blue color with a faint, semi-transparent image of several people walking on a path. A large, semi-transparent blue circle is centered in the upper half of the image, containing the word "aftercare" in yellow text.

aftercare

# Active Linking Initiative (ALI)

# NCOSS opinion of ALI

- a “...flexible, innovative and cost effective program...”
- delivers important health, social and economic outcomes
- designed to offer support and reduce social isolation by drawing on a range of supports within the local community

# Client outcomes

“I can read a book now” said by a 67 year old man who a year ago had found it virtually impossible to sound out a simple word. Although the “book” was a short and very basic publication, the consumer’s pride in his achievement was shared by all ALI staff and professional tutors who assisted him through a mix of programs

“It’s great to get out. I get so bored in this place” from a woman who finds the occasional bus trip and the more personal outings for a coffee with ALI staff a great relief. The woman’s sub-text is that she is getting some enjoyment after hours of unrewarding work for the Boarding House.

# Unexpected outcomes

- the improved ability of residents to voice concerns by raising and supporting their rights
- an increasing ability and willingness to be involved in decision making within the ALI program
- improved health outcomes by increasing mental and physical activity of residents
- improved personal hygiene
- provision of nutritious and enjoyable food as part of a social activity
- opportunity for contact between the boarding houses and the NGO sector

# Licensed boarding houses

(A little history...)

- de-institutionalisation of psychiatric facilities began in the 1960's and early 1970's
- many people with mental illness and other disabilities move into boarding houses
- boarding houses are licensed under the Youth & Community Services Act (YACS Act 1973)
- they are more formally referred to as "Licensed Residential Centres" (LRC's)

# Reports

- Report of the Task Force on Private 'for profit' Hostels (1993)
- Burdekin Report (1994)
- Ryan (1994)
- Health Care Complaints Commission (1996)

# Reports findings

- lack of appropriate support offered to residents
- financial insecurity
- poor health outcomes
- traditionally lacking access to support services
- no appropriate opportunities for assessment in order for support needs to be recognised
- social isolation

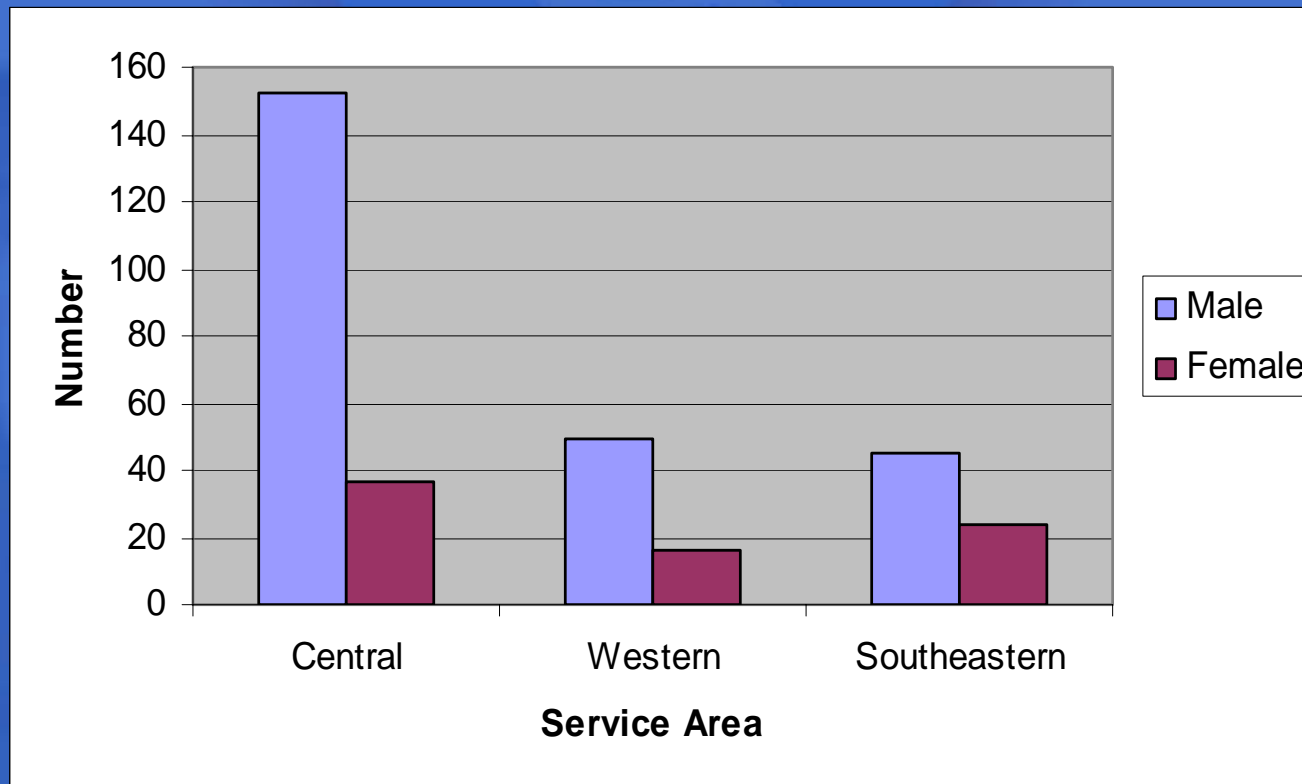
# Boarding House Reform Program

- 1998 - \$66 million reform package for Boarding Houses licensed under the YACS Act 1973 (Funding released in July 2000)
- offer of relocation for high needs residents to alternative community based supported accommodation (group homes)
- facilitation of assessments for placement of people who qualify for aged care facilities
- implementation of the Licensed Boarding House Entry Screening Tool
- provision of support services to people residing in boarding houses with a focus on personal care, primary health care and recreational / social habilitation

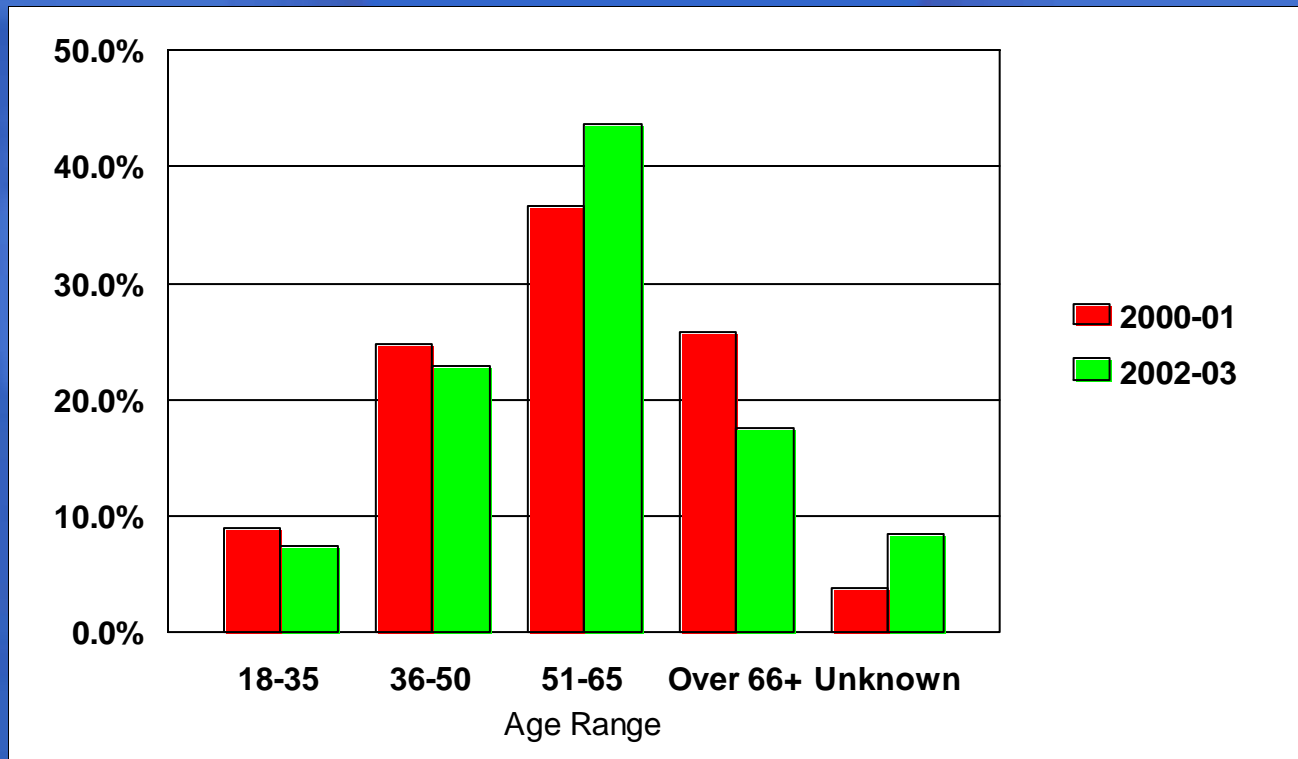
# What is ALI?

- a) pre-skilling
- b) active linking into community based recreational/leisure activities
- c) educational & vocational training opportunities

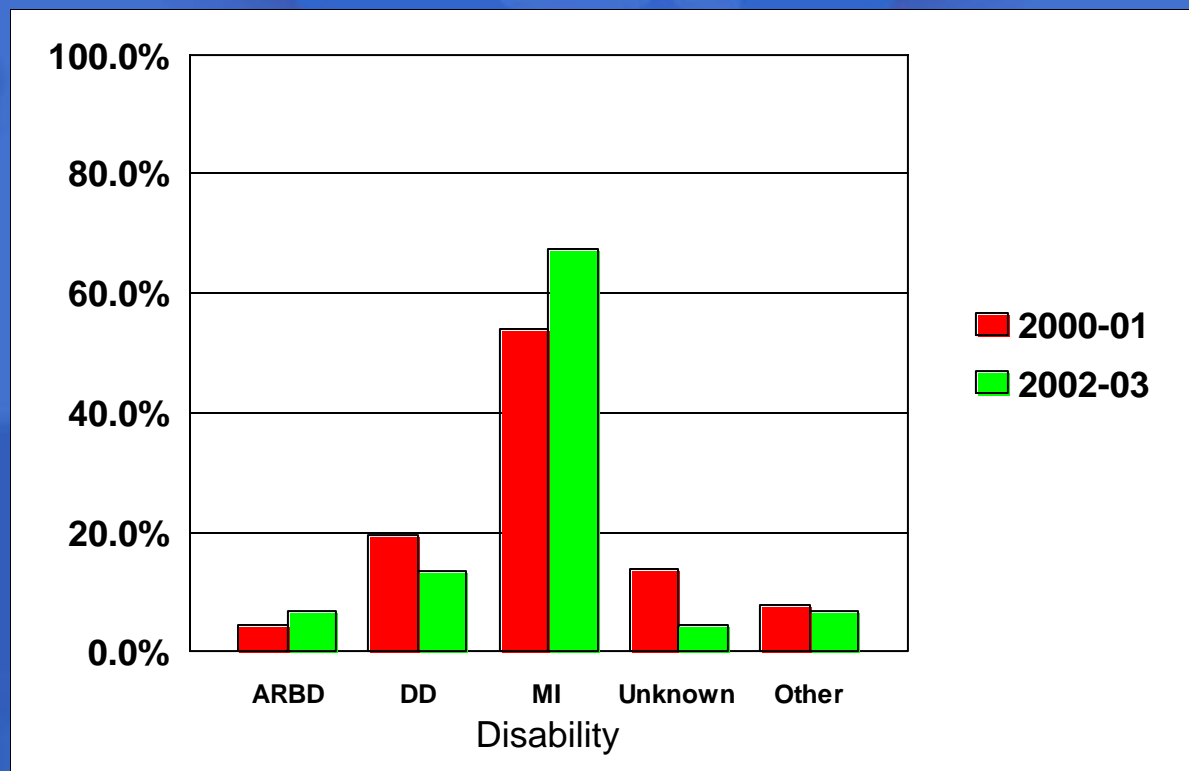
# Gender



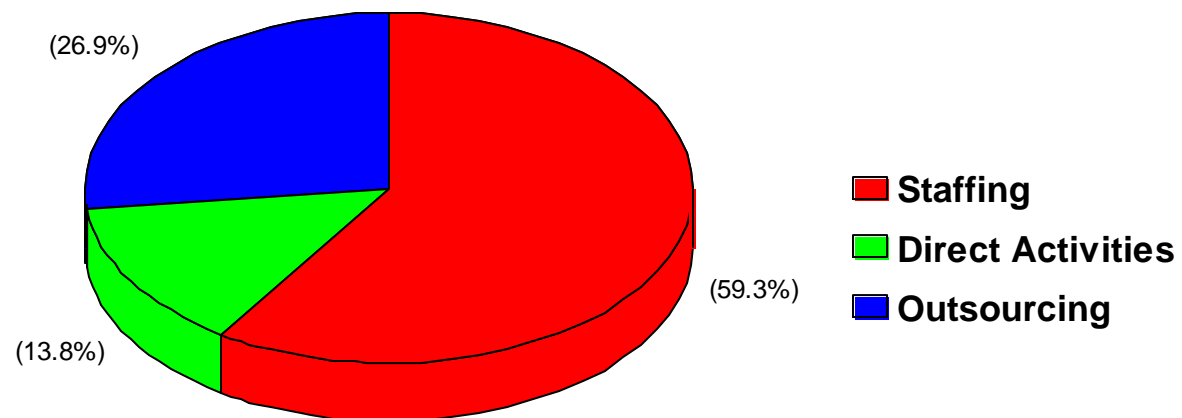
# Age range



# Primary disability



# Activities



# Physical Activity Project

- Calvary Hospital (Boarding House Project Officer)
- SHARE (a provider of community exercise classes in South East Sydney area)
- ALI

# Physical Activity Project

## Attendance Rates per House

Boarding House	No. Residents	Avg. Age	Avg. Attendance	Percentage Attending Weekly
Oak House	10	50.7	5	50.0%
Carinya	24	57.1	13	54.2%
Homewood	22	66.5	5	22.7%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>58.1</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>41.1%</b>

# Barriers to participation

- lack of transportation
- the need for supervision and assistance from carers
- few existing exercise classes in the community that are suitable
- few instructors who are trained to cope with people with cognitive problems or physical limitations
- the cost of classes, equipment and clothing
- the belief that exercise will not benefit them
- decreased motivation as a side effect of medication or mental illness
- being self conscious about exercising in public

(Rimmer et al 2000 & Santariano et al 2000)

# Findings

- a participation level of 40% was maintained throughout the year. (this compared to only a handful of residents who participated in regular physical activity prior to the project)
- some residents were close to achieving physical activity levels recommended by the NSW Health Department
- having the exercises onsite was a key factor in achieving consistent attendance rates
- having a good instructor/supervisor ratio to residents is very important to ensure safety particularly as some residents require physical assistance

# Residents

- had achieved significant increases in muscle strength
- were able to complete functional tasks more easily
- stated they were feeling stronger
- stated they had benefited from participating

# Other issues

- very few training programs exist for fitness instructors to learn more about exercise provision for people with disabilities
- many residents would not be able to attend external activities/appointments independently
- few suitable exercise groups / classes exist in the community
- providing transport, supervision and paying for classes that may exist in the community would increase costs dramatically
- residents are unlikely to go to exercise classes held in the evening

# Recommendations

- continue to fund and run exercise classes at each boarding house
- continue to build variety into the exercise classes by alternating other exercise types (eg. Tai Chi & Yoga with resistance based exercises)
- continue to investigate options for some of the residents to attend community-based classes

# College Access Project

- Sydney Community College
- ALI

# Courses offered

- Accounting for Non-Accountants
- Blue Harmonica
- Brilliant Basics (Living Skills)
- Bushwalking
- Computer Essentials
- ESL (English as a Second Language)
- Horse Riding
- Internet Essentials
- Life Drawing
- Music Essentials
- MYOB V.12
- WoodWork for Beginners
- Writing Your Book

# Five key phases

- recruitment and training of volunteer 'companion' students
- generating interest from residents in boarding houses in the inner west
- matching volunteers with residents
- monitoring progress
- evaluation

# Barriers to participation

- lack of appropriate transport
- relative high cost of courses
- need for peer learning
- lack of motivation (related to medication)
- addictions (ie. caffiene / nicotine)
- presentation (acceptance by other students / community)
- ESL (English as a Second Language)

# College Access Project

Term	Referral	Completed	Withdrew	Referred On
4th - 2002	5	1	1	3
1st - 2003	18	7	11	0
2nd - 2003	16	8	8	0
3rd - 2003	7	3	4	0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>3</b>
		41.3%	52.2%	6.5%

# Findings

- of the 46 residents who agreed to be involved less than half completed their nominated course
- all stated that they enjoyed the course however 50% elected not to continue the following term
- many residents indicated their preference to involve themselves in segregated courses such as cooking
- one companion student became an official advocate for the resident she supported

## Findings (cont.)

- residents and companion students both agreed that 2 hours may be too long for a course
- course times are usually at night however many prospective participants were not comfortable going out at night
- some language barriers

# Reasons for withdrawing

- onset of illness
- course was cancelled due to low numbers
- decided not to take the course
- course was full and could not accept any more residents
- resident wanted a segregated course
- unable to find a suitable companion student

## Other issues

- Aftercare ALI had their funding unexpectedly reduced in January 2003
- background information on residents was not easy to obtain
- residents would frequently believe that the staff from the college were ALI workers

# Recommendations

- to provide assertiveness training such as conflict resolution, negotiation skills, and personal presentation
- to develop our own Learning Module in conjunction with a Special Needs teacher
- to promote the use of companion students

# Final remarks

- concern regarding the dismantling of the Boarding House Reform Unit of DADHC & subsequent lack of direction as a result of their restructure over the last 2 years
- concern that the health needs of residents are being neglected by the absence of any funding to address primary and secondary health issues
- a significant number of residents with high needs continue to reside in boarding houses

## Final remarks (cont.)

- a significant amount of pre-skilling needs to occur before some residents are ready to be integrated into generic services
- due to the level of need low cost, generic activities are not always seen as appropriate (and are often not available regardless)
- as a result of projects such as these we are now more informed when coordinating the development of similar activities in the future



Thank You

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