

To Matthew Swinbourn,

My name is Glenn Neville. I am 38 and live in Esperance, Western Australia. I am writing to you in the hope that, after you read this letter, you are compelled to intervene in the closure of Shenton Park Quadriplegic Centre, which I believe, would be a grave mistake effecting our states most vulnerable people.

In March of 2007, I had a swimming accident at Cottesloe, where I fell and broke my neck which cut through my spinal-cord at a C5/C6 level, rendering me a quadriplegic at the age of 26. I was paralysed permanently, from my collarbone down. I have limited arm movement and absolutely no control of my torso or legs making even coughing impossible. I have incontinence and rely on a supra pubic catheter to urinate which means that I have a tube going through my belly and into my bladder - which is prone to infections; and is changed monthly. I rely on suppositories to defecate which is done with the assistance of a trained professional every second day - for the rest of my life. People with a spinal cord injury need help with almost every area of normal daily life including showering, grooming, dressing, getting in and out of bed and into a wheel chair, medical applications ie opening tablet containers or bandaids or even cutting finger nails, cooking and domestic cleaning, food preparation, transport, hobbies, recreation and general socialisation. etc.

Since 2007, I have frequently stayed at the Quad Centre, despite my home being in Esperance with the love and support of my family, friends and carers. I have needed respite due to the intense level of daily routine. I rely on people to get me out of bed, which is usually at the exact same time every day, at home. Its like a repetitive replay of a bad dream every day but if I stay for a few weeks at the Quad centre, I have the freedom of breaking the routines. I can sleep in - or stay out late with mates (like your average red blooded man) and know that i will have the professional and competent care when I get back, even if its 2am. This alone has a massive positive impact on my mental health. Not to mention the relief that my family benefit from getting the necessary time to recoup and revitalise in my absence.

Another way in which I have relied on the Quad Centre, over the past 12 years has been for specialist appointments and accommodation between hospital stays for surgery and rehabilitation. It has provided me with 24 hour care with staff who are familiarised with the specific needs that I present with. The team of doctors, nurses, carers, physiotherapists, social workers, occupational therapists, kitchen and cleaning staff as well as a recreational centre run by staff who provide courses in art, computer skills, cooking, daily activities and outings are like no other with their care and understanding for the needs of those who have suffered a spinal cord injury. This is not a substitute hospital, but an after care and ongoing accommodation, appropriate to the needs of someone with a spinal injury. Obviously, I am unable to rock up to a hotel or motel and expect to survive!!!

The Quad Centre also has permanent residence and at maximum capacity, homed up to 74 people. They ranged from those that have recently been discharged from

hospital after suffering a spinal cord injury to those that have become a part of the Quad Centre community and made 10 Selby Street, Shenton Park, their home. Permanent residency is a necessary stepping stone for people that are waiting to get out into the community; but would otherwise be homeless, because they are in need of house modifications. I have known residents at the Quad Centre who have needed well over 12 months for renovations, a Homes West house, care packages through the NDIS or just to get all their affairs in order prior to transition back into their community.

Another service that the Quad Centre provides is pressure care management. Having a spinal cord injury means that you are unable to turn yourself over in bed which increases your susceptibility of a pressure sore. These are common and severely incapacitating - and can leave an open wound of raw flesh, the size of a tennis ball, and need maximum intervention and care, sometimes resulting in surgery. Pressure sores can take months, even years to heal. The Quad Centre specialises in pressure sore management and care which elevates the demands off Fiona Stanley Rehab Campus and the sheer number of long term patients within the hospital system. In fact, The Quad Centre have successfully freed up beds that can otherwise be used in hospital for emergencies.

The Quad Centre also has two self-contained units which are fully wheelchair accessible, with hoists, shower chairs and speciality items ideally suited for people with spinal cord injuries. This is of great benefit to the families, loved ones and individuals who do not require on ground staff, despite needing suitable and affordable accommodation during their city stay.

The present location is 10 minutes from the CBD and is very practical and central. Many Quads rely on taxis or public transport, so it is beneficial to be located close to the Fremantle train line.

The Quad centre was founded by Sir George Bedbrook in 1969, a surgeon and pioneer in spinal cord injuries. His goal was to provide safe shelter, care, respite and rehabilitation. The centre has helped thousands of Western Australians in it time. At present, it will be decommissioned within the next 24 months.

I have had communications with Roger Cook, the Health Minister, who has suggested other organisations as possible alternatives; such as the Spinal Out Reach Service, ALBER, Rocky Bay and the MS Society; but none of these provide suitable and sufficient care for me.

Where do regional people like me go, who need respite or rehabilitation? Where do West Australian Quadraplegic people stay, who require emergency housing? We the Quadraplegic community strongly appeal to the West Australian Government and the council to consider completely rebuilding the Quad Centre of 10 Selby Street, Shenton Park. Will you stand up for us?

Yours sincerely  
Glenn Neville