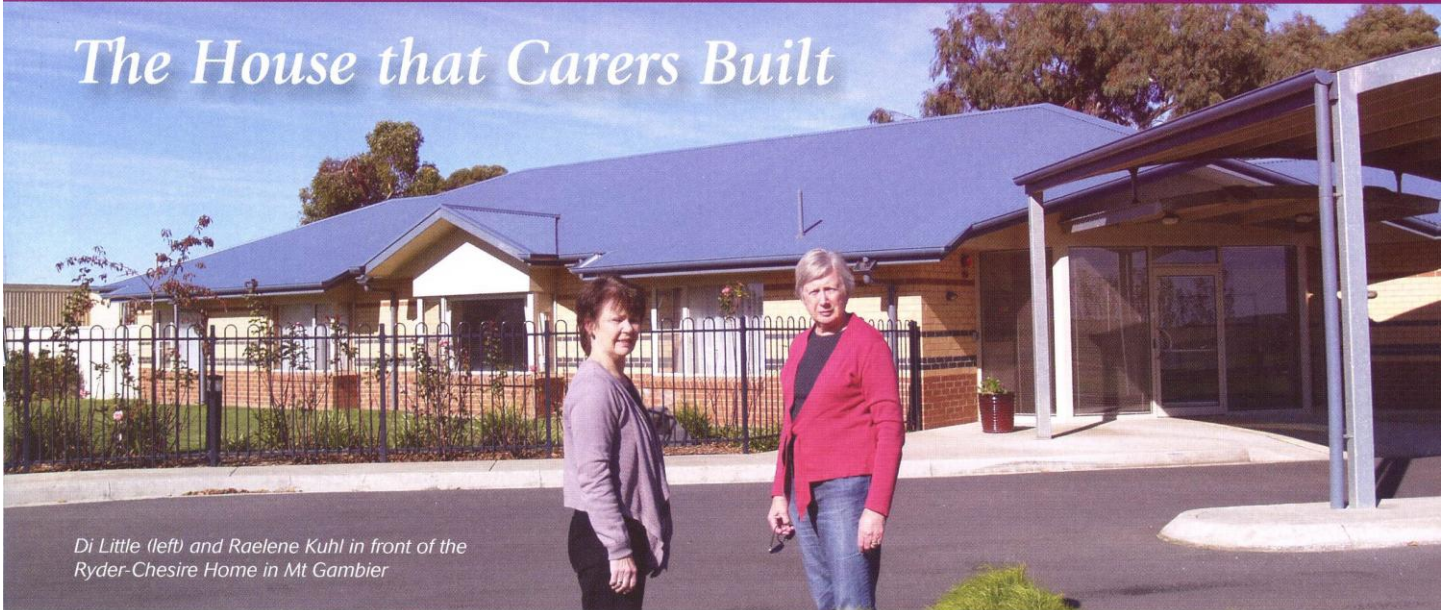


The House that Carers Built



Di Little (left) and Raelene Kuhl in front of the Ryder-Cheshire Home in Mt Gambier

This is really about ageing and housing: ageing parent Carers trying to plan while we are still here. There was never any other thought about it.

We knew each other from a long time ago and had reconnected with each other. We grouped together with some other Carers. How could we do something? We wanted to take a holiday.

It had taken the disability system 3 months to offer Di a place in Adelaide for her daughter which was unacceptable to her. A social worker in Mount Gambier was able to arrange 6 weeks accommodation in a local aged care facility. This person also introduced Di to Carers SA.

For Di that was the beginning of their respite. She said that they were lucky because her daughter had been going to day care, "mixing with the oldies". "I got a bit stubborn at that stage," she said.

We went to the Mount Gambier Council. The Council gave us a good hearing and offered to gift the group a suitable block of land provided we found the funding to build. So we were "armed" with a block of land, a plan and a name, "Studio Style Living for 'Across Disabilities' for Young Adults".

We banged on a lot of doors. We were going on unmet need. We didn't fit categories. It didn't matter what we did, we didn't fit into anything that was available.

Sometimes we changed our title depending on who we met. "If you want something go and find it," a former minister told us.

We had so many obstacles put in our way, including being offered inappropriate accommodation.

We would have a burst of activity, then a bit of a rest then another burst. It was hard work because at the same time we were caring for our daughters at home. We just kept on going.

We had been lobbying for almost 10 years when in 2003 the Ryder-Cheshire Foundation became aware of our group. They had been left a bequest and were prepared to bring our project into fruition.

The house has been open for four years now. Ryder-Cheshire

are the landlords and won an SA Great Community Award in 2007. Disability SA provides the care. We have been fortunate to have our patrons, the Governor General and SA Governor both visit our home.

We sort of pinch ourselves that we achieved it against all the odds. It was a gap in the accommodation area. It was very time consuming but the end result has been excellent.

At the moment there are five women with disabilities, one with ABI, one with APN and three with intellectual disabilities.

We have a strong board, including business people and enough land to build another home.

If something goes wrong we are still very much involved. Even though care is provided we are still only a phone call away from what is happening. We like to be involved. We know that if we passed away the care is there.

Perhaps this story will encourage others to take a CAN DO approach and make things happen.

Di Little

Di had been caring for her daughter, now 43, for 36 years, who after a bout of measles was left with a cerebral tumour and epilepsy. Di is a Carer Ambassador.

Raelene Kuhl

Raelene's daughter, now 38, has an intellectual disability and lives independently in a previously built facility. Raelene is a former Coordinator of South East Carers.

The Ryder-Cheshire Foundation

The Ryder-Cheshire Foundation is dedicated to the relief of suffering among people who are sick, disabled or destitute, without regard to age, race, religion or gender.

"We muddle along. To see she had a routine going: looked after, which is every parent's wish really." Raelene