

# House opening brings smiles



CLOSE BY - Argo resident Scott and caregiver Nicola Broadhead, left, with other residents and caregiver Adele Burns.

Picture: CRAIG SIMCOX

By NICHOLAS MALING

For 20 years Clare Stewart has lived an hour's drive from her son Glen's hospital. Now she can reach him in minutes.

Glen is one of the first residents of Argo Trust House, a custom-built house in Aro Valley designed as a life-long home for six profoundly intellectually and physically disabled people.

Opened today, the house is an example of what the Government hopes to achieve with its controversial policy of moving people out of institutions into community care.

Glen developed spina bifida at five. For 20 years he was in Kimberley Hospital in Levin. Mrs Stewart lived in Wellington with her other children.

"The worst thing about it was he was so far away," she said. "I

would probably describe it as having shutters down over my eyes."

He loved being in Argo Trust House, she said. "Neither of us have stopped smiling since he got here."

In 1991 Peter McLuskie developed the idea of Argo House and was joined in the venture by Mrs Stewart and four other parents concerned about the care available to their handicapped children. They formed a charitable trust.

Robyn Watling, one of the parents, was struggling to care for her 15-year-old son. She was unable to even lift him but couldn't get him a bed in Puketiro in Porirua.

The six-bedroom Argo Trust House was built and paid for by Community Housing, a branch of Housing NZ, and the Central Regional Health Authority is funding its operation. It will be managed by the trust.