

QUEENSLAND *DISABILITY HOUSING* COALITION

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Inquiry into Disability Care and Support
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

To whom it may concern,

RE: Inquiry into Disability Care and Support

Queensland Disability Housing Coalition (QDHC) is a self-funded) statewide peak organisation with a 22 year history of lobbying on housing issues for people with disability in Queensland. QDHC welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Productivity Commission and supports this much needed inquiry into how services and supports are delivered to people with disability in Australia.

QDHC believes much of how this is done presently is fragmented, crisis-driven and results in mainly segregated options with many people falling through the cracks completely, resulting in large unmet need.

QDHC welcomes a system based on entitlement that is portable, person-centred, strengths-based, inclusive of the whole community (not just segregated disability options) flexible, creative and grounded in principles of human rights and social justice.

QDHC believes this new system should be about supporting individuals, not outdated human service systems. Whilst QDHC is excited by the potential for real reform that this new system proposes, we are concerned that unless individuals, organisations and governments are truly encouraged to think “outside the box” in relation to how the needs of people with disability are met, the result will be even more money being poured into inappropriate, outdated services

To this end, QDHC has developed a number of principles we believe should underpin this proposed system. These include:

- ◆ **All people have a right to live in the housing of their choice, in the community of their choice with the social and support networks of their choice:** this is a fundamental human rights principle set out in Article 19 Living Independently and being included in the

community of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), of which Australia is a signatory.

- ◆ **Housing design for people with disability must reflect community norms and standards:** places where people with disability live should not stand out and look atypical from the rest of the community. Housing type and options should reflect what is on offer to the general community, ie detached houses, units, townhouses, medium to high-density apartments, and should be located in desirable areas, close to services and other infrastructure and public amenities.
- ◆ **The management of housing must always be kept separate from the provision of support:** This is a fundamental principle to safeguard people with disability in relation to housing and support and ensure that no conflict of interest occurs. If this is not separate, then if a person has a conflict with their landlord, they are at risk of losing their support, alternatively, if there is a problem with the service provider, the person is also vulnerable to becoming homeless
- ◆ **Special or separate housing solely for people with disabilities should not be the key or only feature on any menu of housing options:** as discussed previously, people with disabilities should be able to choose from the same menu of options as everyone else, not just special or separate housing that is set aside for people with disabilities. People with disability should not be grouped or segregated into particular locations or blocks of accommodation.
- ◆ **Good housing design has great benefits, not only to people with disability, but also to everyone else:** Principles of universal design must feature in any sustainable plan for the future. Accessible housing is not just about having ramps and grab rails. It is about safe and equitable access to everyday home environments for everyone.
- ◆ **A home is much more than having possession of a vacant bed in a facility, or even in some one else's house in a suburban street.** The proposed scheme needs to look beyond current practices such as vacancy management, where people are forced to live together based on impairment and where there is a vacant bed. A person's home is much more than a bed in a house in a street, but rather it is a private place where life is played out in a unique and personalised way.
- ◆ **One's private home should not operate like a facility, nor should it have its focus as the workplace of paid staff where routines, rules and regulations are for their ease or take priority over those of the person who lives there:** The proposed scheme offers an opportunity for people to have real lives, not just lives dominated by service systems and structures, routines and inflexible policy.
- ◆ **The formal service system is only one part of the support solution:** a person's life should be about much more than merely the services they receive. A person's life should be full of meaningful activity and connections with others, such as families, friends, neighbours, and how these natural relationships (that offer so much more than money can buy) can foster love and connection for individuals. This scheme offers the opportunity to think creatively and look outside the current service system to meet people's needs, in ways that are potentially more cost effective. An example of this under the new scheme could be that if an individual has a need to have their ironing done, instead of having to hire

a disability support worker for this function, they are able to use their funds to engage a local ironing lady. This is much cheaper than a support worker, and has the potential of opening up the person's social support networks and safeguards as it is inviting someone from the community to become involved in a person's life.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback toward a scheme that could potentially revolutionise how supports are delivered to people with disabilities and their families. We eagerly await further opportunity to provide comment and the outcome of this review. Should you require further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact QDHC via email qdhc@qdhc.org.au or phone 07 3391 3433..

| Yours sincerely,

Mike Duggan
President