



# **COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**Members present:**

Mr A Tantari MP—Chair  
Mr SA Bennett MP  
Mr MC Berkman MP  
Ms CL Lui MP  
Dr MA Robinson MP  
Mr RCJ Skelton MP

**Staff present:**

Ms L Pretty—Committee Secretary

## **PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION AND REGULATION OF SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION IN QUEENSLAND**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Tuesday, 20 February 2024**

**Townsville**

## TUESDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 2024

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### **The committee met at 9.09 am.**

**CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare open this public hearing for the committee's inquiry into the provision and regulation of supported accommodation in Queensland. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the Townsville region where we meet today and pay our respects to all elders past and present and other First Nations people who may call this country home. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people whose lands, winds and waters we all share.

My name is Adrian Tantari. I am the member for Hervey Bay and chair of the committee. With me today are Mr Stephen Bennett, the member for Burnett and deputy chair; Mr Michael Berkman, the member for Maiwar; Ms Cynthia Lui, the member for Cook; Mr Robert Skelton, the member for Nicklin; and Dr Mark Robinson, the member for Oodgeroo.

The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee with its inquiry into the provision and regulation of supported accommodation in Queensland. We are here today in Townsville to hear your views and suggestions on the next steps about supported accommodation and residential services. Please take this opportunity to share your views with us.

The committee is a committee of the Queensland parliament and its hearings are subject to the rules of the parliament. Before we start, I would just like to say that our proceedings are covered by parliamentary privilege, which means you can give your evidence freely and openly without any fear that your evidence could be used against you in legal proceedings. That being said, if you do provide evidence that reflects poorly on an individual or organisation, the committee may choose to receive but not publish that evidence, or may provide that individual or organisation with an opportunity to respond to your evidence before the committee makes it public in the interests of fairness.

These proceedings are being recorded by the Hansard reporter and will be published on the parliament's website. If you have any concerns about this, please talk to our committee secretary. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings, and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. Please turn your mobile phones off or to silent mode. I will invite anyone who has indicated they wish to speak to the table to give us a brief opening statement after which committee members may have questions for you.

### **HILL, Ms Jenny, Mayor, Townsville City Council**

#### **VERWEY, Mr Jonte, Advisor**

**CHAIR:** I welcome Townsville City Council Mayor Jenny Hill to start the morning's proceedings. I invite you to make an opening statement after which the committee may have some questions for you.

**Ms Hill:** Good morning, Mr Chair and committee members. I thank you for the opportunity to present to this inquiry into the provision and regulation of supported accommodation in Queensland. I also appreciate the opportunity to have made a written submission to you late last year. At the outset, I wish to pay tribute to the various organisations that supply and provide supported accommodation services in the Townsville region. They do a very difficult job. They do this job with inadequate funding and insufficient regulation. Providers often find it difficult to find appropriately trained staff to do this challenging role.

My written submission covered off on the role that supported accommodation providers are expected to play in the rehabilitation of youth offenders exiting the youth justice system. I am firmly of the view that exposing vulnerable young people to youth offenders is only serving to grow a cohort of people engaging in criminal activity. I was recently told of a young person living in support accommodation in Mount Isa being peer pressured into leaving his place of residence and joining some more hardened offenders in a crime spree. Of course, the staff at the accommodation facility had no powers to stop the young people leaving, which is a story repeated by both staff and

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Queensland Police Service personnel. Without the power to stop people leaving accommodation, many supported accommodation properties in Queensland are becoming halfway houses for those stuck in a cycle of offending. As a result, many young people in desperate need of the services offered by supported accommodation—those escaping family violence, drugs and alcohol, to name a few—suffer from stigmatisation which needs to be laid at the feet of the current failure of the youth justice system and residential care regulations.

It is likely that it is beyond the scope of this committee inquiry, but parliament desperately needs to act on how the state accommodates people leaving youth detention and returning to community. Priority should be given to family, whether they be parents, grandparents or aunts and uncles, as the preferred destination for young people leaving detention, not residential care facilities that are not coping with a dearth of funding and regulations. I will leave my opening statement there and I am happy to take any questions the committee may have.

**Mr BENNETT:** You mentioned regulation within the supported accommodation sector. As we have been travelling around, our observations are that there is somewhat fragmented regulation and different levels. In particular, are there some regulations that you could alert the committee to, for this committee's inquiry, that you have come across or that you would like us to be aware of?

**Ms Hill:** One of the issues is around supporting people who are coming out of drug and alcohol rehabilitation into social housing. We would like to see, particularly if you are placing them in apartment style accommodation, that management must be available in that accommodation 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The concern community has is while you leave people, particularly vulnerable people, in social accommodation, there is no-one around to provide support after hours. Most of the services—and this also occurs in the youth justice system—are predominantly 9 am to 5 pm and these people need actual support 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**Mr SKELTON:** Mayor, you have already mentioned that they do not have access to health services—doctors, mental health support, drug programs et cetera—and we have found it is a Monday to Friday thing, and people need supervision. What do you think we could do to improve that?

**Ms Hill:** You tie funding to that supervision. Many of these are not-for-profits. I call some of them 'not-for-dividends' because many of their CEOs and staff are paid very handsomely, and so are their boards, by the way. I would argue that the funding from both levels of government needs to be tied to support in that accommodation. I will be honest, throughout local government we are very concerned around the use of the planning provisions to bypass certain things. It has happened in the Redlands and we are looking at it as local government because we think that could open the floodgates where people could build accommodation without having the adequate support around it because of a flaw through the planning scheme with the government. I can get you that information if you require it.

**CHAIR:** That would be good, thank you, Mayor.

**Mr BERKMAN:** We have heard from a few different quarters the difficulty around the compatibility of residents not dissimilar to what you have mentioned around young people exiting youth justice. Other examples are that the cultural appropriateness of different First Nations groups being housed together, for example, or drug and alcohol dependent folks with those who have recovered from addiction. Do you have any suggestions beyond what is in your submission, for those people leaving youth justice who do not have family or any relatives or that kind of support available to them, what would you consider to be the most appropriate kind of residential option for those people?

**Ms Hill:** I would be very surprised. Through local government, we have a group called the Indigenous Leaders' Forum. At their meeting in October last year, there was a call around kinship cards or kinship care. Because of historical reasons, a lot of First Nations people have historic criminal records that, by and large, as they have gotten older, there really is no issue, but it prevents them from getting a blue card. As the local government group, we are very supportive of the provision of a kinship card to allow extended family members to deal with some of the family issues they have. We have made a submission to government on that and it is part of our policy position around youth crime and youth justice.

I would also strongly suggest consideration of a paper that came out of Mornington council around the provision of funds to many of the not-for-profits and the failure of them to provide adequate programs into their community. It is available on their website. I see their mayor, Kyle Yanner, regularly and we talk. They are very upset that despite the hundreds of millions of dollars of funding that has come through, very few of the programs have made any difference. I think it is one of the

reasons we need to go back and look at kinship care and support that properly. We would probably get a better outcome than funding some of the not-for-profits that go in there, particularly out of southern parts of the country. I think First Nation people have different needs, depending on where you are in the country. A business out of Melbourne may not understand the needs of a community like Mornington Island.

**Ms LUI:** You spoke a little about First Nations people or young people in supported accommodation. I am interested to know your thoughts around what you see as not working and what we could actually change to make it better. You mentioned kinship care for First Nations people. That is one important aspect that needs to be taken into consideration. Do you have any other comments?

**Ms Hill:** If you are talking about breaking the cycle for young people and getting them out of these residential care facilities, I have not heard anyone say a bad thing about the NPARIH program. When that was running for 10 years, people were getting trades, they were engaged and they had jobs, and it provided a focal point for the community. I have always supported, when Alf Lacey was mayor of Palm Island, them wanting the ability to buy their own homes and look after them. I think there is a certain pride in people doing that and it shows community there is a way forward.

In Townsville, close to 10 per cent of our population is First Nations or Torres Strait Islanders. Our workforce at council also reflects that now. There are some fantastic people who are taking their skills back into community, but we really need that support. You have a housing problem in the community. Why not reintroduce that program where people are trained, build and look after their own community homes? To be honest, the problems we are seeing now are people who are coming off communities. They are entering in places like Townsville. There may not be the family support they used to have around them and they end up in a cycle of drugs and alcohol, whereas on community they have family support; there is someone there to maybe say, 'You should not be doing this, and there is a way forward and a future for you on community.'

**Dr ROBINSON:** Thank you, Mayor Jenny, for being here this morning with us. For me personally, it is always wonderful to come back to Townsville, having spent the eighties and nineties here studying and a lot of firsts here in Townsville. Having lived here for a block of my life, in my time here there were two cyclones hit Ayr and Home Hill and one that hit Ingham. You have just had a particularly nasty one which did hit and did a dog leg a little around the north but still took in some of that northern part of wider Townsville. In this case, what impacts has that had in terms of housing stresses in those areas and in terms of cyclone-proofing in the future in terms of what we are talking about with supported accommodation and other accommodation impacts?

**Ms Hill:** I have not heard of any problems here in Townsville. We would call Cyclone Kirrily a baby blow—it just blew down a few trees and some signs. There was no significant damage. I have not heard of any problems in Cairns or Cooktown where a lot of people have been evacuated, so I really cannot give you any insight into that.

**Dr ROBINSON:** Is that something we can better futureproof? Fortunately, we have dodged bullets many times in Townsville, the city proper, not being a direct hit. How do we futureproof in terms of supported accommodation and needs like that?

**Ms Hill:** What we did have problems with were people who were in supported or care accommodation, particularly those who are under the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We heard that during the event, many of the carers just basically dropped people off at cyclone shelters. We heard about this happening in Cairns. We had to prepare, and we prepared our staff in our cyclone shelter if the same thing occurred. I think there needs to be something placed particularly in the plans around how they are to be cared for during the risk of disaster events. That did concern me. We dealt with it, but because it was not a significant event and no-one needed to be evacuated, we did not see any problems. However, if we had to evacuate because of a storm surge, we planned to move out 10,000 people from our beachfront if the surge was as initially predicted by the BoM. To do that, we have to ask people to move in with family and friends. We just would not have enough area to deal with them. If there are care facilities, they would need to make arrangements. Whether or not that is part of their funding and what I call their BCP—their business continuity planning—I do not know. We do not think it is. While nothing happened of significance, the issue is: is that regulation in there to deal with those things? You did prompt me and you are correct, there were some problems in Cairns during the event, and I do not know if anyone has thought about that, as part of their funding, that they must have a BCP to deal with this, and they must test it regularly, at least once a year.

**Mr BENNETT:** Mayor, it is always said that the local government has the best ear of the people in their community. If we park the youth justice issue, what are you hearing from residents in supported accommodation in the city of Townsville?

**Ms Hill:** I suppose you are talking about barbecue chat which is really—

**Mr BENNETT:** No, probably more serious. I guess it is the people with disability and the homeless people who are being housed at different levels, transitioning into other forms of housing. Are you hearing any rumblings? It could be barbecue chat, I guess. It is always said that the government always has the best ear of the people.

**Ms Hill:** We do run an Inclusive Communities Advisory Committee, and what we hear more about is how do we create facilities to assist and pathways, and things like that. That is what we get more from that committee. We have not heard real grumbings around the type of housing. My contact with groups like Family Emergency Accommodation Townsville—FEAT—is around accommodation particularly for people exiting through domestic violence and those sort of areas. That is where we have had issues. To be honest, my Christmas appeal this year predominantly funded those groups to be able to pay for support accommodation for people like that.

**Mr SKELTON:** You mentioned a program—was it NPARIH—that has previously been quite successful. What are your thoughts on other return-to-country programs?

**Ms Hill:** We are supportive of those programs, but they cannot be for days or weeks. They need to be for months and years. Unsurprisingly, I was pulled up by a First Nations woman whom I did not know when I was shopping. She said to me that she has a son whom she has placed into boarding school in Charters Towers. She lives here. She told him that he was going to one of the communities for the Christmas holidays to be with dad because there was no way she was going to have him in Townsville because of the risk of him getting caught up with some of the problems in the city. She said to me, 'There's good value in running programs but they take time.' At the moment you are funding things for a few days or weeks. We have called for funding of on-country programs for a prolonged period where these young kids are well away from social media, easy contact with someone driving up with a car into their resi care facility, where groups can actually engage and truly immerse these young people into culture and rehabilitation. That could be done on community too.

**Mr SKELTON:** It is important that these young people go to the community that is appropriate to them as well.

**Ms Hill:** With the right support. It cannot just be 9 to 5 and we show up, we fly in, do the program and fly home that night.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Mayor, we are obviously no strangers to heat and humidity in Brisbane but the conditions up here are far more extreme. How important is it, particularly for people with disability or in supported accommodation, to have adequate air conditioning, fans or other measures?

**Ms Hill:** It is extremely important because many of them cannot regulate their body temperature. We get them using a lot of our facilities because they are properly air-conditioned, so they can play particularly things like wheelchair Rugby and things like that indoors. It is extremely important, and it is important for them to at least do something more than just sit in their rooms. All supported accommodation, in my opinion, should be designed for the tropics, and it can be designed in various ways. It should not just be block on ground either, because depending on where they are going to live you do not want to put them at risk of flooding and things like that. We have to think hard about the types of accommodation. When businesses find loopholes in the scheme so they do not have to come through a proper planning or building process we need to deal with that. Michael, I really would like to see proper design for the tropics, and I have said this both to the Premier and the Prime Minister around building codes, because I think we can build appropriately and mitigate floods and mitigate cyclones through smart building design.

**Ms LUI:** Mayor Hill, going off what you just said, I think it is a good segue into the next question. Do you think residents in supported accommodation have sufficient choice and control over service providers? You mentioned that proper design would be part of the discussions around properties that suit the tropics. I think that is good feedback. What are your views around residents more specifically having a choice around service providers?

**Ms Hill:** There have been issues around service provision. Especially if you go west of the Great Divide, providers become less and less. We have people moving here because they do not get the opportunity to access simple things like OTs, physios, speech therapists. To the credit of James Cook University, the big bulk of their graduates, because they train them and send them to these areas, will then go back and work in these areas. Any pressure you can put on the federal government to fund regional universities rather than the big sandstone in these areas would be appreciated by everyone. Cynthia, there are a lot of First Nation children who have the opportunity and then go back to community. They really are running some good programs there, and without that training in these regional areas we will not have an opportunity to get the people we need.

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**CHAIR:** Before I go on I would like to acknowledge in the audience with us today the member for Thuringowa.

I have a general question for you, Mayor. What would you like to see changed in supported accommodation, particularly in Townsville or generally across Queensland? Other than the planning issue you have raised, making sure we have appropriate accommodation designed for the tropics, is there any other area in supported accommodation you would like to—

**Ms Hill:** On-site 24-hour management for high needs, especially around drugs and alcohol. Proper support for the workforce because it is a tough job, there is no question of that. It is not a particularly well-paid job—we are hearing this all the time—especially around professional staff development, so we can have the local community trained to work in this workforce too. It is very hard for us to get people out of Brisbane who want to work in Doomadgee or even in Mount Isa or Cloncurry. Why should someone with high needs be forced to move away from their family because they cannot get the appropriate care?

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Mayor. With that, our time is up. Thank you for your insights and valuable knowledge. I think there was just one question on notice.

**Ms Hill:** Yes, the Redlands decision.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for your time.

**PIMLOTT, Mr Aaron, State Manager, Homelessness, Salvation Army**

**CHAIR:** Mr Pimlott, if you would like you may make an opening statement, after which the committee may have some questions for you.

**Mr Pimlott:** Good morning, Chair and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to come and speak with you today. The Salvation Army is an international Christian movement united by faith and giving hope where it is needed most. Across Australia the organisation touches every demographic and age group. The Salvation Army has a demonstrated history of working with vulnerable people in the social and community services sector across the state of Queensland. This work includes social inclusion, community engagement programs, financial literacy, life skills, emergency relief, material aid, specialist domestic and family violence services, specialist alcohol and other drug services and specialist homelessness services and housing.

The geographical scope of this work spans across the state, including here locally in Townsville. The support housing sector often delivers high-quality services that offer value for money and achieve positive life-changing outcomes for the people it supports; however, the low profile and lack of understanding of the sector have reduced government investment and focus over the decades, and now it is trying to catch up. With the current cost-of-living crisis and housing crisis affecting residents and services across the country, the role of support housing is more important than ever. For any new support accommodation development, the Salvation Army would recommend operationalising Housing First principles in accordance with the Queensland homelessness guidelines. This would include: developing a philosophy of service delivery and vision for how this site will operate in collaboration with stakeholders and participation of people with lived experience; core service components and service delivery model in consideration of existing services and capabilities of the community; the separation of tenancy and support and community engagement and communication strategies, including the opportunity for social enterprise initiatives that can enhance economic participation; and a full evaluation carried out of the service and response.

The service model the Salvation Army currently provides is a professional case management and community development service model founded on Housing First principles to enhance the community onsite and integrate into the wider community. Based on the Housing First response model, Salvation Army homelessness stream model of care staff are trained to engage effectively to address identified barriers to service access and promote strength-based, person-centred, trauma-informed service delivery. Currently our services are accredited under Human Services Quality Standard HSQS or HSQF. Some of the people we have worked with in the past and currently are predominantly rough sleepers and have been achieving their personal goals. They provided feedback that they would not have been able to achieve without residing in support housing developments.

In summary, we know that support housing residents have complex needs. Nine out of 10 have at least one health condition or disability, including substance misuse, mental ill health or learning disability, and half are experiencing more than one of these conditions. Good quality support housing has significant positive impacts on residents' health, wellbeing and sense of social connection. Support housing plays a critical role in reducing homelessness and relieving pressures on social care, health care, criminal justice and housing sectors, ultimately lessening demands on public funds. Thank you for your time.

**Mr BENNETT:** That was very comprehensive, Aaron; thank you. If I can go back to the start of your contribution. You mentioned aspirational ideals within how the supported accommodation sector would look like, and you mentioned only one regulatory reform or oversight now. Is that Commonwealth oversight?

**Mr Pimlott:** We currently are accredited under Human Services Quality Standards. I believe we are one of the few specialist homelessness services—

**Mr BENNETT:** Is that Commonwealth?

**Mr Pimlott:** I think it is federal. Commonwealth, yes.

**Mr BENNETT:** Further on from your presentation, what other interactions do you want from governments in your space?

**Mr Pimlott:** I think an increase in advocacy and awareness in the community on homelessness and what is causing homelessness, even to the very basics of how to connect, how you to talk to someone—if you are walking past someone on the street, how do you engage them with the community. The other end of the issue is increased funding to sustain our workforce. At the moment we do top up our budgets from what we receive from government to help sustain our workforce. That

looks like external supervision that the organisation pays for that is not covered in our current funding to make sure that our workforce is careful, is trained, and has the support needed to carry out a very complex role within the community and with the people they support.

**Mr BENNETT:** With those complex needs we are unfortunately witnessing every day, how do you find the capacity of other stakeholders in the region to work with those wraparound services that you need to support these vulnerable people in their transition to something different?

**Mr Pimlott:** We observe that every partner and every stakeholder we are working with on referral pathways are at capacity. There are long waiting lists to access health. We are observing ourselves that the need is very, very high and our capacity is at that point of not being able to take on any more support or people, while doing what we can with what is in our hands.

**Mr BENNETT:** How many clients or residents do you have in your care now?

**Mr Pimlott:** From the stats off the top of my head, across Queensland, women alone, we supported almost 900 women over the age of 55 in the last financial year.

**Mr BENNETT:** In Townsville?

**Mr Pimlott:** Across the state.

**Mr BENNETT:** Do you have the numbers for Townsville?

**Mr Pimlott:** No, but I can get back to you with numbers for Townsville. Our Townsville response focuses on alcohol and recovery services, youth services and more recently a mobile veterans housing response. That has been getting up and established here in Townsville over the last six to nine months.

**Mr BENNETT:** We met some wonderful colleagues of yours in Cairns yesterday who are doing great work.

**Mr SKELTON:** Thank you for everything the Salvos do, particularly in my electorate. I am based in Nambour and I have a first response team and have your people up there helping the homeless every day of the week. You have already touched on the support here in Townsville. Can you drill down on the youth side of it, as in youth supported accommodation here in Townsville and also broadly across Queensland?

**Mr Pimlott:** Broadly across Queensland, the Salvation Army does not have a youth accommodation program. The organisation has been pivoting away from that over the last five years and focusing on secondary education and training opportunities for young people.

**Mr BERKMAN:** You are probably aware that the Public Advocate's report that kind of sparked this inquiry was looking specifically at level 3 residential services under the residential services act—so a specific regime that is different from supported independent living or specialist disability accommodation. Do you have any reflections for the committee specifically on the kinds of accommodation and issues with its provision under that act?

**Mr Pimlott:** With supporting very vulnerable people, the response needs to be different to the traditional RTA response and the legalities that housing providers, community housing providers and the private market operate under. As I mentioned, the complexity of the needs of people means they need that wraparound support in order to sustain tenancy. It is really looking at that second chance, third chance, fourth chance to keep that person housed in order for their tenancy to be sustained. There are various responses to the need. At the pointy end, for supported accommodation, supportive accommodation and into the private market, there are obviously different avenues of wraparound support that is required for each of those cohorts along the housing continuum.

**Ms LUI:** How important do you think it is that people with lived experience have an input into improving supported accommodation?

**Mr Pimlott:** We value that very highly. We value the voice of lived experience in the design and delivery of our services to the point of having lived experience representation in our Queensland reference group that oversees our strategic agenda for the organisation in its housing and homelessness work. On the front line and on the ground with community participation in any programs, we value that lived experience and voice—to the point where we are hoping very shortly to have lived experience on our recruitment panels for staff. We value very highly the voice of lived experience to inform, to challenge our thinking and to assist with service delivery and responses.

**Dr ROBINSON:** I commend you and the Salvation Army for the work you do in this space. As a Christian and as a pastor myself, I think it is critical that church groups do as much as they can in the caring space, whatever that area of caring is. My view is that government cannot do it all so it is



great that you are in that space. My question is around your funding models. How do you make it work? Obviously, there are things like the Red Shield Appeal and other forms of donations privately from caring people, with the government being a part of that as well. How do you make what you are doing sustainable across the state, here in Townsville and wherever else you are working?

**Mr Pimlott:** We are funded by the state government. At our last audit of our finances, we were looking at around 60 per cent of our operations being covered by the state government. That is our homelessness and housing response in Queensland. The other 40 per cent is made up by the Red Shield, philanthropists, business leaders and donations. Across the nation, Queensland does have one of the highest donors compared to other states over many years and decades. We have some very long-term donors who continue to donate to the work of the Salvation Army and more specifically to the homelessness response of the organisation. Red Shield and donors make up the majority, and the rest would be state government.

**Dr ROBINSON:** Thank you for that overview. It is important that it is sustainable in those partnerships and with government. Are there areas of concern or areas of relationship with government where it is possible that we can enhance what you are doing on the ground? Obviously there are important regulations that are there for everybody's safety and the wellbeing of the clients who need your services. Are there things that can be done to streamline what we are doing at a state level that would help you on the ground?

**Mr Pimlott:** We welcome the recent news from the state government with the 20 per cent uplift in specialist homelessness services. It is much needed in our service and across the sector. There has not been a major increase in funding for a number of years, even though the award that our staff are paid under continues to go up. We do receive CPI indexation from our funding. In terms of matching the award our staff are paid under, it has been increasing but the funding has not, so there has been a gap that has been occurring over many years so we welcome the additional 20 per cent.

We would welcome further funding to help sustain the workforce. Across the sector I am observing workforce stress or potential burnout across the sector. Our organisation is trying to counter that by putting the extra funds and resources to our workforce, which is funded by donors, which is funded by the Red Shield Appeal to have that support for our workforce. There is external supervision, further training and monitoring caseloads as well. As I mentioned before, the need is great but what is in our resources is nowhere near what the need is. Our teams are very compassionate people and are very passionate about the work they do and we need to monitor their caseloads so they are not having too much on their workload and going down the pathway of potential burnout, which would affect the quality of service provision. Another area that we are intensively monitoring is our staff's workload and having a balance of quality service provision whilst also trying to meet the needs of the individuals who are coming through our doors.

**Mr SKELTON:** You were here when Mayor Hill gave her submission and you touched on it just then when answering the member for Oodgeroo about having staff members who have the appropriate qualifications and support and also having that level of support that can be 24 hours if that supervision is required. She more or less alluded to the fact that the legislation will have to be tied in with compliance to that. We do not want a lot of red tape, but would you have any qualms if that was the case and it was regulated to that effect?

**Mr Pimlott:** We pride ourselves on quality service provision, so when we are recruiting staff we are recruiting for tertiary qualified staff. We provide a professional case management service so we have case managers, not support workers, who are providing the majority of care for individuals. Internally, we do have a particular benchmark when we are recruiting. That becomes challenging in areas like Mount Isa. We do have service delivery in Mount Isa where we struggle to find similar levels of competence to other larger cities, like Brisbane and the Gold Coast, so we put other mechanisms in place to support that. If we hire someone who has a cert III or cert IV and may not have that tertiary degree, we will put extra support and training in place for that individual. The individuals are matched to the organisation around values, ethics and passion for the work that we do. If we see that in an individual, we will provide the extra training and support for their professional development. Some of our staff in Mount Isa are currently undertaking further qualifications since being with us, and we wholeheartedly support that and provide some co-contribution to the costs of those additional studies.

**Mr SKELTON:** That is what the mayor was alluding to—having the locals there doing that support.

**Mr Pimlott:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mr BENNETT:** From a statewide perspective, we heard about a new build on the site in Cairns which is all very exciting and giving some human dignity back to that aged facility. Is there much of that going on around the state from the Salvation Army's perspective?

**Mr Pimlott:** For the Cairns response, we are very excited to deliver the 40 units in partnership with the state government. They have been intentionally designed for the tropics—for the weather and the environment up in Cairns. The Salvation Army does have a few other projects in the pipeline, more shovel-ready projects, and a place to start would be in Toowoomba. We are looking on the Gold Coast for a similar response and inner city Brisbane as well. We are also looking in Rockhampton for a similar long-term housing response and really taking advantage of the Queensland Housing Investment Fund, which we are well aware closes in March, so to put some further submissions in. We are offering land and a design and looking for partnership with the state government to provide that capital to build further social housing in those locations.

**Mr BENNETT:** Are there increased opportunities with the NDIA for supported accommodation from the National Disability Insurance Scheme? They are looking for projects. That is obviously another partnership option, isn't it?

**Mr Pimlott:** We are not an accredited or registered disability provider in Queensland. We definitely have people who come through our doors with a disability who are undiagnosed and we have referral pathways and work with disability providers to get that support for those individuals.

**Ms LUI:** Aaron, you spoke before about training your workforce and getting them up to standard to provide the right support for people in supported accommodation. I am interested to know your thoughts around some of the other things that facilities are getting right?

**Mr Pimlott:** Sorry, some of the other things?

**Ms LUI:** You mentioned upskilling your workforce. What are your thoughts around some of the other things that facilities are getting right?

**Mr Pimlott:** I think having a purpose-built facility is one of the main factors. Where we currently have operations and are providing supported accommodation in facilities that are not purpose built, a lot of the challenges we are facing there are because of the age of the building and the building not being fit for purpose for what we are actually delivering on site. Fit-for-purpose buildings is a big factor. Having trained competent staff with the appropriate type of support is another factor. A 24/7 response is very expensive and needs to be funded handsomely from the funding body, whether that is the state government, to allow for that to happen. Where this is a strain on funding and budgets, that is when organisations will look at where they can save funds. That is probably why you are seeing the reduction in hours and not that 24/7 response in some service providers due to the financial pressures that are being experienced.

**CHAIR:** Aaron, obviously the mayor was here earlier talking about the appropriateness of having youth in supported accommodation, and we had a general conversation about where we could house those youth. Are there any barriers for the Salvation Army in establishing local residential services for youth in providing supported accommodation and drug and alcohol rehabilitation? Are there any barriers for you to get into that area?

**Mr Pimlott:** I can respond with the broader direction of the Salvation Army's youth response mainly due to the size of its historical response to providing youth supports and where we have seen positive results in its operations, and that has been on the youth education side, providing extra training and a different schooling product than the traditional schooling system. When it comes to our youth response in Queensland, we do have some schools that we operate. That has been our focus moving forward, rather than investing further in a youth residential or housing response due to there being other organisations that are much larger doing that. We understand where we sit in our youth response. We do understand that a youth response from a housing and residential perspective requires a specialist response rather the general specialist homelessness response that I am responsible for—the adult response. A youth response definitely needs to be specialised and tailored to young people. It is a different response to the specialist housing response.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Aaron. Thank you for coming along and speaking with us today and for sharing your points of view. I really appreciate that. One question was taken on notice about the statistics on the number of people in the Salvation Army support programs in Townsville.

**Mr Pimlott:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.04 am to 10.17 am.**

### **BURNS, Mrs Beverley, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** I welcome Mrs Beverley Burns to the table. Mrs Burns, I understand that today you are going to talk about your son who lives in a residential service. I need you to be aware that, if you do provide evidence that reflects poorly on an individual or an organisation, the committee may choose to receive that but not to publish that evidence or may provide that individual or organisation with an opportunity to respond to your evidence before the committee makes it public in the interests of fairness. We look forward to hearing what you have to say.

**Mrs Burns:** Yes, that is fine.

**CHAIR:** Mrs Burns, would you like to talk about your son's experience in residential services?

**Mrs Burns:** Stephen is at present with the AS&RS. Are you all familiar with that term?

**CHAIR:** No.

**Mrs Burns:** It is Accommodation Support and Respite Services, which has been a Queensland government-run service. There were attempts to outsource it over the years which did not work, but it has continued. Stephen has been with them for about 30 years and I have seen very big changes. I do not know whether this is absolutely relevant to this investigation or this committee but the service has had to change from being a Queensland government supported one to the NDIA or NDIS. In doing so, it had to become a cheaper service to run. That is the big thing. This particular service that he is in has catered for people with fairly high demands, most of whom needed somebody awake at night. Of course the NDIA did not want to fund that. This has been ongoing. Now clients who have to have someone are allowed to have someone. In other words, the services had to become cheaper to run to fit into the NDIA to be compatible with other services. It has always been a bit more expensive.

He has been with them for about 35 years now, so I have seen a lot of improvements in this particular service. Now there is the complication that the people who are employed to give support in the accommodation are limited as to what they can do with the clients. Under the NDIA, I think they can provide support to go to the hospital, doctor, shopping and banking. I think that is about it. In a few weeks my son will be coming up for Easter. He comes by bus which everyone groans about but that is his choice to come by bus, and it is not particularly cheap. He has to have somebody take him from Ipswich into Roma Street bus station. Formerly this has been done by the people in the house. Before, the AS&RS was able to have a group of people who were employed by them that they could call on for extra things such as taking Stephen into the bus. That can no longer be done. It has to be done by the people in the NDIS agency who provide other support for him now.

That is another tier of bureaucracy really. It is done through the coordinator. I think at present he has a fairly good coordinator, but they have been very much up and down. The agency is an Ipswich one. At present they are good, but coordinators and the support workers that they employ vary quite a bit in knowledge—knowledge about how to build relationships with these people. This is the complication now. I think it is organised now but it takes organisation to contact the agency as well as the house.

As far as I am concerned, incorporating this service into the NDIA has not been a great help. The accommodation service itself in its limited way now is quite satisfactory—more than satisfactory. It is good. The big worry for people who have family living there is that they might outsource the service if they cannot keep going. I think the youngest clients would be about 50 and the oldest ones are in their seventies. Unless they are able to bring in new people to provide accommodation for younger people, the service will eventually die out. What will happen to those people who are in their sixties and seventies is quite a worry. Whether the AS&RS will be able to keep supporting them is my concern.

**CHAIR:** Is there anything else you would like to elaborate on with regard to your son's experience at the accommodation?

**Mrs Burns:** Do you mean about the accommodation itself?

**CHAIR:** Yes, for your son.

**Mrs Burns:** He is an autistic man with an intellectual disability. He does not relate particularly well to other people, so he has to be in a unit of his own. He has been in share houses and they do not work.

**CHAIR:** That does not work for him.

**Mrs Burns:** No. They have ended in disaster, so he really needs an individual unit. For the last 10 years or so he was in a unit in another part of Ipswich, but they have let that house go. It is back with social housing which is a good thing in some ways. He now has a unit of his own attached to a Townsville

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house where there are three other people. He is in a separate unit which suits him very well. There are two support staff looking after four people. He does not need one-on-one support the whole time. In fact, he would not want it, but the support is good. It is adequate.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Would you mind taking some questions from the committee?

**Mrs Burns:** No. That is okay.

**Mr BENNETT:** I was happy to hear your story. I do not know that I have any questions, Chair. It was an interesting development. The national disability insurance process is complex. I personally do not have any questions for Mrs Burns.

**CHAIR:** There being no further questions, thank you very much for your time. We appreciate you coming along to share your story about your son. You mentioned that your son has been in that situation for 35 years. I also have a son who has autism. He is on an NDIS package himself. Obviously I have a personal interest in what happens down the track when I get older and my son gets older. Obviously we will be looking at support for him. Overall, would you say that the 35 years has been a good experience for your son? He has been well looked after?

**Mrs Burns:** For the first 10 years or so I think it was very up and down. It varied greatly. Everything depends on the people you have interacting with your offspring.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for sharing your story. I appreciate that. If no-one else wishes to come to the table, that concludes the public hearing. I thank everyone who has participated today. Thank you to our Hansard reporter. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. I declare this public hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 10.29 am.**