

Inquiry into the provision and regulation of supported accommodation in Queensland

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Level 3 supported accommodation; a micromodel example of neoliberalism in situ.

Neoliberalism: *a political approach that favours free market capitalism, deregulation, and reduction in government spending.*

Over the preceding 17 years I have worked, in varying capacities, with community members who consequent to abject relational poverty reside in level 3 boarding house supported accommodation. As a Social Worker this relational exposure has been at worst, a deep insult to my moral and ethical sensibility and at best, a profound opportunity to practice radical acceptance.

If memory serves me, the level 3 model of supported accommodation emerged as an alternative to the psychiatric bin model that I guess, in a similar way to this enquiry, came under the scrutiny of individuals and groups who, perhaps finding inspiration from ideas such as the family care system developed in the European town of Geel, recoiled with outrage at the wholesale social poverty that prevailed. And at the same time, I recall stories from Wolston Park in which staff members would invite patients' home on weekends welcoming them to join in with their family affairs; or other community members who would venture into these psychiatric facilities and cultivate unscripted and surprisingly fertile connections.

Admittedly, I have tried without a great deal of relational satisfaction to engage voluntarily in a social exchange of kind. For several years I connected with a 30 something-year-old male who was transitioning out of a Secure Mental Health Recovery Unit facility. While things never really evolved (relationally) beyond the intention. What I did take away from this experience was a somewhat confronting appreciation of how my own social needs and preferences are specific and not readily met through a generic relational experience. And for this I remain eternally grateful and dare I say, a better Social Worker. And perhaps in a broader sense this social prescription experiment concluded with a highly vulnerable individual avoiding an oft-inevitable level 3 supported accommodation outcome; a residential community stained with narratives of sexual and physical violence.

For me, one of the most confounding aspects of the level 3 supported accommodation experience is the variance between a resident's substandard living experience and the inspiring quality of staff that these services attract. On a daily basis one can witness countless altruistic gestures freely exchanged between staff, visitors and residents; generous expressions of goodwill that are all too easily smothered under the weight of systemic oppression and greed. Effectually, landlords benefit financially from residents whose human rights and capacity to contribute to their communities remain wilfully neglected.

It appears that you cannot quarantine a large number of relationally impoverished people into squalid marginalised living conditions without cultivating social entropy. Indeed, the next time your curiosity about the future of neoliberalism arises, go and visit a level 3 supported accommodation facility.