

## **Inquiry into the provision and regulation of supported accommodation in Queensland**

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# **SUBMISSION**

**Inquiry into the Provision and Regulation of  
Supported Accommodation in Queensland**

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| <b>Submission Title:</b> | Inquiry into the Provision and Regulation of Supported Accommodation in Queensland  |
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## CARERS QUEENSLAND

The activity and impact of providing care is best understood in terms of its context; as a relationship between two or more individuals, rooted in family, friendship, or community. Caring is a role rarely chosen by most, nor does it discriminate. Children and young people, people of working age and older people, people with disability, people who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse, First Nations Australians, people with diverse bodies, genders, relationships, and sexualities and those living in rural and remote Queensland provide care to family members or friends daily. For some caring is a short-term commitment while for others, it is a role that literally lasts a lifetime.

Family and friend carers provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic medical condition, terminal illness or are frail aged. Carers come from all walks of life.

Carers Queensland is the peak body representing the diverse concerns, needs and interests of carers and caring families in Queensland. Carers Queensland believes that all carers regardless of their age, disability, gender or gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, geographical location, or their cultural and linguistic differences should have the same rights, choices and opportunities and be able to enjoy optimum health, social and economic wellbeing and participate in family and community life, employment, and education like other citizens. Carers Queensland's mission is to improve the quality of life of all carers throughout Queensland.

We aspire to provide an independent platform from which to advance the issues and concerns of the 533,200 carers in Queensland and believe our knowledge and expertise in carer issues means we can provide the Government with relevant and trusted information that will ensure that the needs of carers will be recognised, respected, and acted on.

Our submission is informed by national and international peer reviewed data, our own experience as a service provider and the personal and often difficult admissions of carers, those people who provide unpaid care and support.

## Introduction

Carers Queensland believes that everyone has a right to an adequate standard of living, including having housing that is safe and secure, having adequate food and water, and access to the continuous improvement of living conditions.<sup>1</sup>

We advocate that every individual has the right to safe, accessible, secure, and appropriate housing, regardless of their personal circumstances and promulgate that it is the responsibility of the State government to ensure the availability of safe housing that protects vulnerable residents from exploitative and predatory residential providers.

Carers Queensland supports the discussion and recommendations made by the Public Advocate in their publication, *“Safe, Secure, Affordable?”*, *The need for an inquiry into supported accommodation in Queensland*. We welcome the opportunity from the Government to offer the following discussion points and recommendations to the Inquiry into the Provision and Regulation of Supported Accommodation, with specific reference to people with disability, mental ill health and alcohol and other substance abuse disorders.

## Discussion

The marketisation of public/welfare housing of the 1980-1990’s diminished access to safe, secure, and affordable accommodation for many citizens, including those that are most vulnerable. For many vulnerable individuals their inability to source and secure accommodation appropriate to their needs means that residential providers are their ‘last resort’ option. Already marginalised, often socially isolated and with poor self-advocacy skills, these individuals can, and do, unnecessarily ‘fall through the gaps’, not aware of or unable to access the support services appropriate to their needs.

### Oversight and Accountability

Carers Queensland advocates for greater oversight and accountability of supported accommodation providers through mandatory registration with the Queensland government.

We believe, because of the chronic vulnerability of the residents, supported accommodation providers, like other community services, must be held accountable for the quality of their services and subject to the same level of government scrutiny as other providers.

Carers Queensland would support a system of mandatory accreditation with an independent accreditation agency to strengthen the transparency of the supported accommodation sector.

### Supporting Social Inclusion

The risk of social isolation of individuals living in supported accommodation can be mitigated by effective case management support.

Carers Queensland appreciates that many residents will not have family or support networks on whom they can rely for assistance and advocacy.

Carers Queensland strongly advocates for supported accommodation providers to be responsible for ensuring all residents are linked to at least one, appropriate external service provider (e.g. disability

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<sup>1</sup> International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

support, other social care services etc.) and ensuring all clients who require engagement with multiple services or sectors receive assistance to do so at every juncture.

We contend that residents without family or a nominated representative, are allocated an advocate to assist the resident with translating and understanding needs, tenancy and other obligations and other entitlements including formal complaint.

Once residing in the accommodation, the Community Visitor's authority is required to be strengthened to upkeep this level of monitoring and accountability for the residential accommodation provider. The more supports and services involved with the residents, will reduce the risk of social isolation, and mitigate service delivery failure by the social care system.

### Safeguarding

We have been advised by carers that it is a stipulation of some providers that the resident must utilise the 'inhouse' support services such as personal care and social support. This practice is a distinct breach of the principles underpinning the disability and aged care sectors and serves to only increase the vulnerability of the resident.

In the current format, there are very few safeguarding processes or structures in place to support the residents' autonomy, empowerment, and control and protect them from harm, neglect, or exploitation from either the provider itself or other residents.

Carers Queensland recommend that:

- a. for the safety and wellbeing of all residents they have access to regular visitors, including carers and support networks, to ensure that the individual has the opportunity to raise their fears and concerns, concerns are raised and mitigated;
- b. that a similar model of care to Supported Independent Living is enacted. This would provide greater guidance for providers, ensuring all the resident's needs are met, their safety and wellbeing is respected, and there is a structured model for carers and public guardians; and
- c. in the absence of a national adult safeguarding framework, the Queensland government mandate the adoption of formal safeguarding checks, including mandatory training for all staff in mental health and trauma informed service delivery, to ensure the safety of all residents.

### Carers Involvement

Carers have advised us that they experience persistent refusal or frustration to gaining access to information, residential contracts and the property. This raises concerns regarding the resident's financial, social, emotional vulnerability and isolation.

Carers Queensland advocates for the increased involvement of family and friend carers, and when necessary, the public guardian and public advocate, in the lives of individuals residing in supported accommodation facilities.

Carers Queensland strongly believes that carers/and or family and where applicable the public guardian, should have access to and visibility over all agreements, including but not limited to the code of behaviour agreements, fees and charges, and agreed services.

## Recommendations

Carers Queensland believes that level three residential accommodation should be used as transitional housing only and each resident is proactively safeguarded against opportunistic or routine abuse, harm, or exploitation.

We advocate for the development and implementation of a standardized intake assessment process that is reviewed by the Department of Housing for every individual entering this type of accommodation.

Funded by the Department of Housing, the binding assessment would include:

- a. the resident's social and safeguarding support needs;
- b. whether these will be provided by the accommodation provider or approved third party;
- c. information for the individual's support network (e.g. family, friends, public guardian)
- d. information on what other services and systems the resident requires and a plan of how the residential accommodation provider will assist the resident to access and navigate these systems; and
- e. a detailed plan to support the resident to move onto permanent affordable and secure housing in a timely manner.

At the assessment each resident would be allocated an independent Community Visitor.

We recommend that this assessment should be like the type of assessment Supported Independent Living providers undertake when considering a new tenant.

We contend that the Community Visitor would be the appropriate body to review these assessments and ensure transition plans are being adhered to, ensuring these providers are held accountable for the standards of accommodation and services provided.

Carers Queensland would welcome the opportunity to work with the Queensland Government to draft an appropriate safeguarding framework to protect vulnerable adults from abuse, harm and exploitation.

In summary Carers Queensland would like to make the following recommendations:

- A standardized intake assessment is developed and implemented for all accommodation providers to ensure the accommodation is suitable for the individual's needs.
- Providers must be responsible for ensuring all residents are linked to at least one other social care service such as third-party providers, hospitals, social workers etc.
- Greater levels of transparency and visibility for family members and carers, in instances where residents to have capacity. Carers to be provided with copies of all residential agreements, including service fees, intake assessments and transition plans.
- Formal adult safeguarding measures are employed and mandated for all providers, along with training in mental health and trauma informed practices are put into place.