

Inquiry into the provision and regulation of supported accommodation in Queensland

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Committee Secretary
Community Support and Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Committee Secretary

**[SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIMENTARY INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION AND REGULATION OF
SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION IN QUEENSLAND]**

I am making this submission as an individual and as the family member of a resident currently residing in supported accommodation in Queensland.

My son is a 27-year-old man that lives with a diagnosis of schizophrenia and oppositional defiance disorder. My son is currently residing at [REDACTED] – [REDACTED] QLD. My son has lived at [REDACTED] for 12 months. Prior to coming to [REDACTED], My son lived at another supported accommodation residence, [REDACTED].

Often for people experiencing severe and persistent mental illness, supported accommodation has become a last resort due to the unaffordability of the private rental market and the long wait lists of public and social housing. Currently My son is paying \$470 per week to live at [REDACTED]. This leaves very little money for My son to be able to afford to save for the bond and two weeks rent required up to access independent accommodation, not that he would be able to afford to rent on his own in the private rental market. Residents effectively become trapped in this sort of accommodation as there is no security of tenure and no viable options out of the accommodation unless they are lucky enough to obtain public or social housing.

The first day that My son arrived at [REDACTED] he was given two pillows that had clearly been used by other people, as they were stained and marked. I went and brough My son some new pillows as it was unacceptable that someone be provided with pillows to sleep on in the condition that these pillows were in. Please see attached photos. Since his time at [REDACTED] My son has made numerous complaints to me about the cleanliness of the property, particularly the showers and bathroom. Shortly after moving into [REDACTED] My son develop a fungus growing on his feet that took several months to treat effectively.

Around October, [REDACTED] was taken over by a new owner/manager named [REDACTED]. Since this time the quality of the food has declined significantly. Please see attached photos of an example of the meals provided. I do not believe that the new owner [REDACTED] is abiding by the recommended *Toolkit for healthy eating in supported accommodation: A best practice guide*, published by Queensland Health.

Shortly after [REDACTED] came onboard as the new owner, she forced all the residents to sign a document agreeing to her contacting all the current disability support agencies and other external providers to disclose their personal and confidential information to the owner. My son told me that he signed the document because he was scared that he would be made to leave if he didn't. Please see attached document and my email to [REDACTED] in relation to my concerns about the document.

In or around November 2023 a new resident [REDACTED] moved into [REDACTED] [REDACTED] is a man in his 50's that was recently released from prison for sexually abusing children. Shortly after [REDACTED] arrived at [REDACTED], he disclosed to My son the abuse that he perpetrated on children. While he made these disclosures to My son he was masturbating in front of My son. This is classed as a sexual assault. My son told me about the incident straight away. I encouraged My son to report it to the manager and to the Police. My son did not feel comfortable reporting to the Police however did report it to the manager at time, who then reported it to the new owner [REDACTED]. I advised My son's support workers of the assault. I also followed up the incident in an email to [REDACTED] which I have attached. I attempted to follow up the assault with [REDACTED] Police, as [REDACTED] had indicated in her email communication to me that she reported the incident to them, however my phone calls to the station went unanswered. I then reported the incident to [REDACTED] probation and parole. They advised that they would make an anonymous (at my request) report to the Police. I have not heard anything more in relation to this.

I am also aware that [REDACTED] is stealing items from local shops and selling them, including selling to residents of [REDACTED], for money to buy drugs. I have also been advised that [REDACTED] is openly using the drug ICE at the accommodation.

I am of the understanding that [REDACTED] intends to provide her own support workers to the residents, thus taking away the choice and control of the residents to choose their own support options. If this were to happen, this could be very problematic. Whilst there are outside providers coming into the residence, there are eyes on the residents thus providing some level of safety and accountability. At this point I need to commend the work of the organisation CPL for their support and advocacy of My son to ensure his wellbeing and safety remains a priority.

The new owner [REDACTED] manages the property by herself and has no staff assisting with cooking, cleaning or any other tasks. [REDACTED] often asks the residents to assist with tasks around the house and will reward the residents that help out with chocolate bars.

When I have tried to raise my concerns in writing with [REDACTED], she has not answered my questions, and has indicated that My son needs to vacate the property. Please see examples of my communication with [REDACTED].

Due to the issues occurring within [REDACTED] including the poor food quality, My son physical and mental health is suffering. My son is hungry all the time and often has to go to the corner store to buy extra food to eat. My son has advised me that they are not allowed to take any outside food such as takeaway, into the property. My son has large dark circles under his eyes and has started talking about wanting to access assisted suicide.

There needs to be consideration given in relation to the staff employed at supported accommodation having a minimal level of qualification, so they safely and respectfully support the residents living there. This needs to include the owners/managers. There needs to be consideration given to eligibility criteria of new residents coming into the accommodation. Some of the people living in supported accommodation are the most vulnerable in our community. These residents have the right to be housed safely and with dignity. There needs to be further review of the intersection between corrective services, the homelessness sector and supported accommodation. Released prisoners have the right to housing, however I don't think it is always beneficial to place them into supported accommodation with other vulnerable residents that are experiencing mental illness and disability and at times, are not able to make good decisions.

Moving forward, I would like to see the recommendations of this inquiry include the following:

- Regular auditing approaches like HSQF (Human Services Quality Framework) be implemented for all supported accommodation services. This approach to funded human services across Queensland maintains important safeguards for people using services while streamlining quality requirements. It needs to be extended into non-government funded services that care for or provide supports to vulnerable people as a safeguarding measure.
- Specialist Police Officers with specific training in mental health, disability and trauma informed support be embedded in police stations across Queensland to specifically support and investigate matters relating to the most vulnerable in our community, including the elderly, those experiencing mental ill health and disability and those experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, similar to the current child protection notification system, I would like to see a mandatory reporting response be implemented for these vulnerable groups. Whilst CPL have been advocating for the residents of [REDACTED], I am aware that there are other support providers that have witnessed what is happening there but have chosen not to report or say anything.
- Priority waitlisting on public housing register for people living in supported accommodation that have a current housing application in place. Just because these residents are not openly living on the streets or in public spaces, that are still experiencing homelessness. Homelessness Australia uses the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) statistical definition of homelessness. "When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives, they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:
 - is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
 - has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
 - does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations".
 Supported accommodation, also known as boarding house accommodation, is classed as tertiary homelessness (Mackenzie and Chamberlain, 1992). Tertiary homelessness is experienced by people staying in accommodation that falls below minimum community standards (e.g. boarding housing and caravan parks).
- I would like to see homelessness outreach programs be extended into residential supported accommodation spaces to support people to apply for public housing, including support to complete their applications, gather the required paperwork and documents and advocate on their behalf if required.

I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry.



Photos of pillow given to resident on arrival at [REDACTED].

Examples of food provided at [REDACTED]



