

Inquiry into the provision and regulation of supported accommodation in Queensland

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SAI Submission

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Submission

I have lived at [REDACTED] for two- and a bit- years. When I first moved here, I was petrified because I'm not used to living amongst such a large group of people. Even after two years of getting used to it, it still makes me nervous, because at my age things are different. It was easier for me to adapt and cope with challenging situations when I was younger, but now I get very nervous. This is all even though I generally find most people to be pleasant here.

There are a few very nice people that live here, but I don't mix very much because I am always worried about saying the wrong thing and upsetting people. There can be a bit of drama and when you are living with so many people this becomes a lot more work to manage. I have had some negative experiences in this regard, over the years. This has led to a loss of confidence, and now I feel like when ever I say something people will take it the wrong way.

I'd say the food is a 7/10, and same goes for the people here. I find you have to do a lot of work here yourself. It takes a lot of work to stay on everyone's good side. I don't want to be hurt so I do my best not to hurt others, and this reflects the feedback I feel comfortable providing in this submission. Mostly I try to live my own life and let others live theirs. The fact that there are so many people here makes that very hard, though... to please everyone... I'm finding that very hard. Often things you say are repeated without context or misconstrued so that when you hear about it again it is completely different to what you said. Things happen in a very round-a-bout way in that sense. This makes me very careful about what I say and do here, which means I try to limit my contact with other people living in the village as much as possible.

Management do not get involved in issues between residents. Everyone is left to fend for themselves in this regard. I deal with my problems by talking them through with the two good friends that I have. We go through the A, B, and C for- and A, B, and C against- things until we work them out.

There are about 36 people living here, and it is singles accommodation, so everyone is living in their unit alone. We don't have much to do with the other Supported Accommodation sites around us ([REDACTED] and [REDACTED]) because there are rules that prohibit us from entering their sites, and them entering ours.

We are allowed visitors for a single night. I'm not sure whether there is any limit to this because it's never come up for me.

Food is supplied but I'm not a big eater. I have a hot meal provided by the village at lunch time and then I just take some yoghurt and fruit for tea that I buy myself, which I keep in a fridge in my room. This is partly because sitting in the mess hall with other residents during a mealtime makes me anxious. There is generally about 8 of us sitting around a table during communal meals and I feel like

I have to be careful about what I say in that sort of interaction. Something I could say over lunch could come back up two weeks later completely out of context. I've learned to not share my point of view on things when we are having a yack.

Rent here is \$900 per fortnight, which comes straight out of my pension payment – I get what's left after this deposited into my bank account. The \$900 is supposed to cover rent and food but this number increases with rises in the pension – sometimes they take the whole rise and other times you get a bit extra when it goes up. I pay for medication and personal care services out of my own money. I get some services through Anglicare via my Aged Care package. I also have to pay for my own electricity, which is metered. Electricity works out to be about \$110 a quarter usually.

I don't really feel like these costs are fair at the end of the day, but what can you do. You've got to accept the way things are and focus on making the best of it – of making things as pleasant as they can be with what you're given. I don't like to complain or argue.

I recently had to surrender my licence – I've got glaucoma – and it's really been hurting me lately, but I will get over it eventually. Not having a car and the associated mobility and independence hurts. You don't realise how much it means to your life until you lose it. It's really changed my life because I can't do all the things that used to make life nice, and I now spend a lot more time at home as a result. I used to enjoy doing things like going for a haircut or heading to Mudgeeraba for a coffee. I had a favourite café where a man would sing for customers. He had a beautiful voice and I used to really enjoy going there for a cup of coffee and listening to him play. Sometimes I would just go for a drive for something to do. Now that I don't have my own car, I rely on a friend that still drives – I see her usually once per week and we do stuff like that together. The village doesn't offer any activities like this and using public transport is beyond me – I haven't been in a bus for about 50 years... I'd probably end up in Katoomba if I caught one. I'm not confident.

The village does organise some communal activities down in the hall. There's table tennis some Sunday afternoons and they put a BBQ on, but you have to pay if you want to eat the food – it's about \$5. You can see where this is going... you always have to put your hand in your pocket if you want anything around here.

I have a few thousand dollars in savings in the bank that keeps me going and will have a bit more after I get the money from selling my car. This helps me feel a bit more positive about my financial situation because it's a bit of a backup. Before I sold the car, I was getting pretty worried about money... Sometimes when you look at things on paper it can look like it's fine, such as living here and having \$60 left over at the end of the week after the village takes all of its fees out of your pension. It might look like you have \$60 left over at the end of the week, but you're always panicking inside because what if something goes wrong, like your TV breaks. Where are you going to get the money to get a new one?

I ended up living here because there weren't a lot of options, and I didn't want to live in a share house arrangement – I wanted my own space. My friend heard about this place, called for me, and a week later I moved in. I had to hand over a \$1,000 deposit to move in, which is to cover unpaid bills or damage when you leave. I don't expect to get it back – they are very good and getting things their way because they are businesspeople.

It's very easy to be taken advantage of in these places. You're always having to think things through carefully – A, B, C for, and A, B, C against. The world has changed so much in the 85 years I've been alive. To me it's like we're going down a black hole and things are deteriorating very quickly. The main consolation for me is that soon I'll be pushing up weeds, so it won't affect me too much before long.

I feel very blessed to have my friends. I've got two great friends that ring me every second day. If it weren't for them, I'd be very lonely. I play the lotto with the hope that I win some day and can buy a nice house – if I did, I have a friend who would be up here from Sydney like a rocket, and we could live out our days together in a beautiful house. We know each other inside out and she's the person I would live with if I had the choice. It would mean we could do the sort of things that really matter in life together, in company... like go out and get coffee together. If neither of us could drive we could get a driver, too! Luckily for now she's a good driver, at least.

I am happy for my submission to be published, including my name and the name of the place where I live.

Yours faithfully

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.