

Inquiry into the provision and regulation of supported accommodation in Queensland

Submission No: 193

Submitted by: [REDACTED] (submitted by Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion)

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 9 February 2024 3:41 PM
To: Community Support and Services Committee
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: [REDACTED]

Dear Committee

Please accept the below submission from [REDACTED], who was a resident at a Supported Accommodation site operated by [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]
Full name: [REDACTED]
Phone number: [REDACTED]
Email address: [REDACTED]

Submission

I was previously a resident of a Group Home operated by [REDACTED], which was situated in [REDACTED]. The house had 5 bedrooms, but there was only meant to be three living in the house at any given time, because the other two residents were at a 1:3 support ratio. I found out about the accommodation online and was attracted by the videos they had on their website that seemed really positive, particularly around independence, choice and control.

To live there, [REDACTED] took \$950 out of my Disability Support Pension every fortnight. \$150 of this money was meant to be for my food, but over time I went through the food receipts that staff would leave in the kitchen and discovered they were spending about \$150/week total for food for all the three of us residents. The freezers were filled with frozen chips, vegetables, and sausages and this was what was used to serve meals to residents. When requested, [REDACTED] declined to take us out for meals or vary our food offerings. I ultimately worked around this by using some of my NDIS funds to do 'food classes' on site on Fridays so that all the residents had a chance to eat good quality food.

[REDACTED] also billed my NDIS package for supports. At the time, my total NDIS package was worth about \$1.3 million. I was getting a private support worker in from 9:00am to 4:00pm Monday to Thursday and [REDACTED] billed me for 24/7 1:3 support outside of these times. I did some basic calculations and figured that [REDACTED] was making approximately \$3.8 million per annum in fees and billing from the three residents living there. I also looked up the previous rental listings from when the house was last on the private rental market and saw that it was last leased for \$450/week. After a while [REDACTED] stopped allowing my privately contracted support worker access to the Group Home, because they did not want 'outsiders' seeing what was happening in there.

I made a series of complaints about the fees and services to [REDACTED] management and was punished because of this, particularly because I addressed my concerns directly to the head office of [REDACTED], rather than to house staff in the first instance. As a result of these complaints, I was punished and subject to abuse. I am double incontinent, and use incontinence pads, with which I require personal care support refreshing. I am changed and bathed by support workers, generally on my bed in my bedroom. Staff would frequently tell me that I needed to learn to use a bathroom unsupported. I believe they did this simply because it was not something that they wanted to assist with. At one stage staff took my incontinence pads off me and forced me to go without them to 'teach me continence'. I would soil myself in front of the other residents as a result, which was very humiliating.

On one occasion, shortly after making a complaint about this to the [REDACTED] head office, two support workers took me into a bathroom, bent me over and used a hose set to full pressure to 'clean' the area between my buttocks. This was incredibly painful and unpleasant, and resulted in bruising. After the incident support workers refused to assist me to take a photo of my injuries, which I could not do myself. I eventually brought a legal claim regarding this

incident, which was unsuccessful due to the lack of evidence substantiating my claims. I have Complex PTSD and am unable to enter bathrooms.

On another occasion, I was threatened by [REDACTED] staff with a sexual harassment complaint. The basis of the complaint was that I had touched myself inappropriately in front of staff and residents while mimicking a Michael Jackson dance move. Staff told me they were filing a complaint with the police, but when I contacted the police, they informed me that no complaints have been filed against me. During this period other residents were coached by staff to say that I had touched them.

Group Homes are supposed to help residents become self-sufficient and independent, such as through building capacity around self-care and life skills, but in reality they focus on building capacity and independence in areas that require their support but don't suit them, such as toileting, while otherwise deepening resident reliance on them in all other aspects so that you are ultimately dependent on them and will never leave. Residents are manipulated into staying in Group Home settings by being told that they are never going to get anything better, and that they just need to accept it because the only alternative is homelessness.

The other two residents that I lived with were 'more disabled' than me, and as a result I was expected to lower my standards of living and expectations to conform with theirs so that [REDACTED] could accommodate our supports and community access as a group. This meant I wasn't allowed to go swimming in a pool, or go for bushwalks, because the other residents couldn't participate in these activities and I was forced to do things with them, as a group. I was always expected to compromise with regards with what I wanted to do throughout every day. I was consistently told that I had no choice in this matter.

The choice and control that was available was better under the old system that pre-existed the NDIS. My experience ever since the NDIS came in has been atrocious. After leaving the Group Home I have transitioned to living on a bush block in Gordonbrook, which is outside of Kingaroy. I am a huge advocate for Independent Living Options (ILOs) and much prefer living under such arrangements. Queensland is way behind other states in providing for ILOs, which forces people to stay in 24/7 supported accommodation models which ultimately end up costing far more, as such settings do little to nothing to promote independence and self-sufficiency in real terms. I actually feel as though the NDIS is consistently trying to punish me for exercising my right to live in ILO, because they do not approve of my living situation. This makes me feel like I have to be extremely careful about what I say when I deal with them, because if I say the wrong thing, they might use that as a pretext to restrict or reduce my funding and force me back into a Group Home.

At the moment I'm paying \$200 per week to live on a bush block out the back of an Equine stables. I don't have electricity or water services, but I am so much happier living this way and am constantly learning to be more and more self-sufficient. I now live off solar energy and am constantly learning more and more about self-sufficient living. I feel more supported by my informal supports than the NDIS but feel like the NDIS is working to move me out of this property, even though I am happier living here now than anywhere I have ever lived in my life. I don't have a formal bathroom, and the NDIS doesn't like that, but the abuse I suffered in Group Homes (outlined above) exacerbated my complex PTSD and prevents me from using bathrooms anyway, so why should I need to live in housing that has one?

I am working on starting a not-for-profit that advocates for more accessible camping sites, as I love the outdoors and think it is wrong that it is so difficult for people with disability to access the outdoors. I plan to produce t-shirts and other merchandise to support these activities and raise awareness about this. I want to make this submission and share my story with the Inquiry so that other people aren't hurt by these awful systems.

I want my submission to be published, including my name and the name of where I lived.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]
Supported Accommodation Advocate



Advocacy for people with disability

P [REDACTED] | **W** qai.org.au | **Days** Mon - Fri

Living and working on Jagera and Turrbul country.

QAI respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional owners of this land and recognises their role in our work, in the disability community and in society.



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