

## Housing Position Statement

### Summary

Family Advocacy has a vision of an inclusive society, and that means inclusive housing, too. An inclusive housing system is one which caters to the needs of all people, including people with disability, and provides for and encourages social mix. Diverse communities are good for everybody.

A housing system that is inclusive of people with disability has four features:

- **Separation of support and housing**
- **Deinstitutionalisation**
- **Adequate affordable housing**
- **Accessible housing**

This is a view that many people around the world share. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability supports “the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others.”

With these points in mind, Family Advocacy seeks:

- **More community housing**
- **Public housing**
- **Home ownership assistance, including secondary dwellings or granny flats**
- **Increased Commonwealth Rent Assistance and private rental assistance at a state level**
- **Accessible housing**

### Features of an inclusive housing system

Family Advocacy has a vision of an inclusive society. All people who have disability are full members of the community; good communities are made up of a diverse range of people; people who have a disability have contributions and skills to bring to society.

An inclusive housing system is one which caters to the needs of all people, including people with disability, and provides for and encourages social mix. Diverse communities are good for everybody.

A housing system that is inclusive of people with disability:

- **Separates support and housing:** This means that the person receiving support has the flexibility to change service provision without changing homes, and vice versa. When housing and support come from one provider, the person has less control and is more vulnerable.
- **Makes deinstitutionalisation a reality:** Many people with disability continue to live in segregated accommodation or congregate care facilities in Australia<sup>[1]</sup>. Some governments in Australia are still funding and licensing these facilities and redeveloping new 'contemporary' institutions for people with disability. People with disability have long been obliged to live in segregated environments because it is the only way they can receive essential support. However, governments can just as readily provide support in housing in the community as they do in institutions. People with disability, particularly those with very high support needs, may be viewed as incapable of living in the community. There is growing evidence and examples of people with disability, including those with very high support needs, successfully living in the community.
- **Provides affordable housing:** Adequate, affordable housing is a human right, and it applies to **everyone**. Adequate means the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity, with legal security of tenure and availability of services, facilities and infrastructure. Housing should be habitable, accessible, appropriately located to employment, health and education, and be culturally adequate. To be adequate, housing must be affordable.
- **Is accessible:** Accessibility is part of adequate housing. Housing must be accessible to those entitled to it, including people with disability. Housing law and policy should take this fully into account, including for the percentage of people with physical access needs.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability upholds this view, supporting "the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others." It commits countries who have signed the convention to "take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community, including by ensuring that:

- (a) Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement;
- (b) Persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community;
- (c) Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs.”

With these points in mind, Family Advocacy seeks:

- **More community housing**

Community housing is managed by non-profit, non-government organisations. This is mostly affordable rental housing. Rent is usually capped at 30 per cent of a person’s income.

Family advocacy seeks better funding for community housing in NSW, and the continuation of federal government funding for affordable housing developments.

- **Public housing**

Public housing is rented out directly to low-income tenants by a state or territory housing department.

A recent report from the NSW Auditor General’s office found all social housing only meets 44 per cent of need in the state. Routine maintenance is often put off due to budget constraints and despite well-documented need, more dwellings are being sold off than built or acquired. About 214,000 people are currently living in public housing. There are a further 55,000 eligible households (representing about 120,000 people) on the waiting list for such accommodation (Audit Office 2013 pp. 2-3).

Family advocacy seeks better funding and improved social mix in public housing.

- **Home ownership assistance, including secondary dwellings**

Shared ownership is also known as shared equity or part ownership. Currently there are shared equity schemes operating in Western Australia, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, as well as elsewhere around the world such as Britain. The buyer can purchase from a percentage of their property and therefore services a mortgage on the percentage of the property they purchase, with the state owning the balance. Family advocacy seeks a shared home ownership scheme for NSW.

Additionally, the granny flat or secondary dwelling provisions in NSW could be more widely promoted to potential investors, including families of people with disability.

- **Increasing Commonwealth Rent Assistance and private rental assistance at a state level**

Commonwealth Rent Assistance has not kept pace with rental costs. Between 2002-2012 average rent increased by 76 per cent for houses and 92 per cent for other dwellings, whereas CRA only increased by CPI. Currently 21 percent of people accessing CRA are receiving the Disability Support Pension. Family Advocacy seeks greater access to CRA for all people with low incomes and/ or all people with disability.

Private rental assistance options are available from Housing NSW. Family advocacy seeks to extend and improve this assistance.

- **Accessible housing**

Currently, Liveable Housing Australia (LHA) is the national accreditation program (like the Heart Foundation tick) for accessible design in the building industry, but has no enforcement capacity. It has three levels of accreditation, silver, gold and platinum. Silver is considered a good standard of universal design and is able to be modified for access needs.

Unfortunately, the targets have not been met. In relation to around 140 000 building approvals for new buildings per year, 263 dwellings were certified silver level LHA and 9 of these had been built.

While community education may be useful, it is not sufficient to change entrenched practices. Therefore regulation should require that all new affordable housing stock be built to the Gold standard of Liveable Housing Australia, with all new homes in the private market to be built to Silver standard by 2020.

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