

# QUEENSLAND DISABILITY HOUSING COALITION

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## NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2006

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of QDHC Inc

“Spring, a time for cleaning out the cupboards, renewal, going to AGMs...”

(Editorial by *Mike Duffan*)

You are probably aware that Spring is often the time of the year that is called: AGM time! Our AGM is on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October and it will be held at the Spinal Injuries Association, 109 Logan Road (Cnr Balaclava Street), Woolloongabba. Apart from the usual opportunity to network and to learn about the work of the organisation, this year we have a special treat! There will be a performance by Brisbane Playback Theatre. If you haven't seen it before it is quite an event to experience. Those of you who have will already know this and probably can't wait to see it again.

As well as the fun of Playback, the AGM provides an opportunity for the organisation to gain a new management committee. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage members to participate in the work of the organisation in three important ways: renew their membership, attend the AGM and consider nominating for the committee. Organisations can only grow if they attract new people.



This newsletter is a little shorter than usual because it also contains the paperwork for the AGM. People wishing to nominate for the Management Committee need to be current financial members and need to return their nomination forms to the office two weeks before the AGM (by 10<sup>th</sup> of October, 2006).

At this time of year, people often question and reflect why they belong to particular organisations and what they gain from membership. I believe that QDHC provides a unique voice for people with disability in relation to housing issues and this voice is important in the current times of change. It is for these reasons that I encourage people to both renew their membership and become actively involved in the organisation.

In this edition of the newsletter we look at the issue of Mental Health and housing as a member generously shares her story, and we have a follow up of the 'Welfare-to-work' conference, as well as all our usual inclusions. We hope you all enjoy reading this edition of the newsletter and I look forward to catching up with some of you at the AGM.

Peace,

*Mike Duffan*



## **Karin's Kapers... just what has QDHC's Coordinator been up to?**

I've been really busy at QDHC since our last newsletter. The work of QDHC is not just one person's effort. Whilst I carry the responsibilities of Co-ordinator, I've had the benefit of collaborating with QDHC committee members and staff as well as people from other housing peaks, disability advocacy organisations and networks. Here is a thumbnail sketch of what we've been involved in.

### **Formal policy responses:**

- QDHC Workplan 2006/2007 to the Department of Housing
- QDHC Policy Review
- Policy on Abuse, Assault & Neglect of People with Disability (DSQ) (Informal Response Only)

### **Advice at forums/consultations/workshops:**

- Responding to Homelessness Reference Group
- DSQ Reference Group
- QCOSS Peaks Meeting
- Homeless Persons Information Queensland Reference Group
- Community Safeguards Coalition Workshop
- BCC CityShape Reference Group

### **Attendance at workshops/conferences:**

- Intake and Assessment Workshop (Department of Housing)
- Most Significant Change Workshop (Qld Government)
- Qld Public Tenants Association AGM

If you would like further information on any of these areas of work, please call me at the office on **(07) 3391 3433**.

A word about our kit

## **A Home of My Own: Right, Rhetoric or Reality?**

We just want to remind people that this resource for people with disability and families (and those who support them) is now available. We also wanted to thank people for the overwhelming support and interest that has been shown in this kit.

**The kit is now available on the web! Go to:  
[qdhc.org.au](http://qdhc.org.au)**

For further information or to obtain a copy, please phone 3391 3433 or email [qdhc@qdhc.org.au](mailto:qdhc@qdhc.org.au)

## Maia's Moment

Hi Everyone,

Spring is the time to...

Put away your woolly clothes,  
Dodge the magpies,  
And renew your QDHC membership... if you haven't done this already!



A big 'thankyou' to the numerous members who've sent in renewals since our last newsletter. With the AGM fast approaching, we'd like to invite all our members who haven't done so to renew their memberships with the enclosed renewal form.

Warm wishes to all and I look forward to meeting you at the AGM,

Maia

### **Papers across Karin's Desk...**

From time to time interesting articles, papers or resources come across my desk which are too lengthy or not directly related to the newsletter's theme. I thought it would be a good idea to list them here and if you'd like further information or a copy just contact the office and let us know...

#### **Welfare to Work**

Foe papers relating to the *"Road to Where? The politics and Practice of implementing Welfare to Work"* conference go to:

<http://www.uq.edu.au/swahs/index.html?page=44305>

For the legislation go to:

[http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au/piweb/view\\_document.aspx?id=2202&table=BILLS](http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au/piweb/view_document.aspx?id=2202&table=BILLS)

And for the ACOSS response go to

[http://www.acoss.org.au/upload/publications/papers/1029\\_info%20Welfare%20to%20Work%20Summary.pdf](http://www.acoss.org.au/upload/publications/papers/1029_info%20Welfare%20to%20Work%20Summary.pdf)

#### **Cultural Awareness**

Opper, I. (2006). Culturally Responsive Service Delivery: Information for service providers. Brisbane: Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland.

#### **Support Systems**

Moving Towards a System of Support: Ways toward ensuring proper management of disability funds and services to create a more flexible system that promotes freedom and strengthens community. (2002). Brisbane: Qld Parents for People with a Disability.

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**In recognition of Mental Health Week 8-14 October, we bring you the housing journey of one of our members...**

*I was born and lived in the hospital for some weeks until my new mother came and took me to live on a farm with two older brothers. As a young child I was okay but very anxious about things. I often cried to sleep at night. Then my family and I moved to the town to go to high school.*

*When I hit puberty I got sick. I struggled with an eating disorder and suicidal depression, my mother struggled with obstructive and ignorant doctors. I spent some time in hospital, experienced some nice nurses, some definitely not so nice.*

*Things settled down and after school - I flew the nest to the city to go to university. I lived in a share house with a woman and her adult daughter, who had mental health issues herself. That didn't work at all so for a while I slept under my older brother's TV in the tiny flat he shared with a fellow student.*

*Thankfully I soon found a new share house, with four older, male fellow students. This was a steep learning curve for the shy, young girl from the country! That was good, and after a year or so I moved on to share another house with one of them and three friends. I finished university and began working full time, renting my own flat. My own home! I enjoyed decorating and furnishing it (From Lifeline, but so what!). It was my place!*

*Then my mental illness struck again. I lost my job, my flat, and moved in again with my mother in her small two bedroom unit. We struggled again, this time as two adults in a more confined space. But anything was better than hospital again!*

*My mother and I moved to a house, and I received public, then private psychiatric care, to varying degrees of success. I went to share the house of a close friend and two others, one a nurse. Far from receiving tolerance (let alone acceptance) of my fluctuating mental health, things were shaky till the 'house meeting' after a rather loud, drunken night.*

*I was soon back to my ever-patient mother, with a vow to never share again. Struggling on the disability pension meant my only chance for independence lay in the then named, Housing Commission. I put my name on the waiting list in three suburbs.*

*I needed to be close to my mother, close to my doctors, close to public transport and in a nice (cleanable!) place that I could make my home. After four years, a flat became available.*

*So began a lot of debate with family and friends;  
Was I well enough to cope with living by myself?  
Is it the best option at this time?  
I took the plunge.*

*I have been living in my own flat for over three years now. I have a great psychiatrist and treatment plan. I'm doing better than ever, with a lot of help from friends and family. YIPPEE!*

*Unfortunately now my mother is aging and unwell. She needs assistance. So we are considering living together again, which will mean companionship and support for both of us...*

**QDHC gratefully acknowledges the time, effort and emotional investment involved in sharing personal stories. We believe stories are invaluable as they highlight and encapsulate the issues faced by so many people. It challenges QDHC to continue chipping away at the issues.**

## ARE WE 'ON THE ROAD TO NOWHERE'?

### QDHC REFLECTIONS OF THE WELFARE TO WORK CONFERENCE

BY KARIN SWIFT

*We wish to acknowledge the QCOSS E-Bulletin in the writing of this article.*

I couldn't help but hear the melody of the old Talking Heads classic, "We're on the Road to Nowhere" playing in my head when Mike Duggan and I attended the "**Road to Where? The politics and practice of implementing Welfare to Work**" conference in Brisbane in July. This was an international conference sponsored by the University of Queensland's School of Social Work and Applied Human Services.

This conference examined the stark implications of the recent amendments to the Employment and Workplace Relations Bill which took effect from 1 July, 2006. QDHC had a particular interest in this conference because we know that if people's income security is threatened, so is their housing.

This Bill has potentially devastating impacts on the lives of people with disabilities and on sole parents who are relying on income support arrangements. According to figures discussed at the conference, an estimated 158 000 people will be put on lower payments through Newstart or Austudy rather than the Parenting Payment or Disability Support Pension (DSP).

People with disability who received the DSP prior to the changes going through Parliament are protected from the new laws (unless they go off the DSP because they begin working 30 hours or more a week), however people applying for it after this date will be assessed under new criteria via a 'Work Capacity Test' (which will assess the ability of a person to work 15 hours per week). This has potentially devastating effects for young people with disability (under 16) as the DSP will no longer be a given.

I don't think many people would argue against people with disability having a right to participate in the labour market. In fact, most people would applaud genuine efforts to increase and enable the economic participation of people with disability. However, these measures are merely punitive in nature and do little more than punish the individual for a systemic problem.

Major systemic change needs to occur on a number of levels to enable people with disability to work. Perhaps the biggest and most challenging of these is the discrimination that occurs to people with disability attempting to join the labour market. There needs to be a major shift in attitude of people in general. Workplaces also need assistance to make themselves accessible to people with disability.

Also essential to the success of people with disability in the labour market is an adequate support system. The stark reality is if I don't have support to get out of bed in the morning, I can't get to work. This may make people uncomfortable but it's the truth. People need good quality support to enable them to get to work as well good support while they are at work or they will be just set up to fail.

A paradoxical effect of the legislation will be to make it harder for people who want to study despite the clear connection between higher qualifications and better jobs.

Also, people with disability who are allowed to stay on the DSP will also find it increasingly difficult to access employment assistance, as priority will be given to people moved from the DSP to Newstart. Figures discussed by Peter Davidson (ACOSS) at the conference based on NATSEM analysis says that a single adult with a disability studying fulltime and renting may lose up to \$164 per week, and a sole parent with a child 8-15 in the same situation up to \$60 per week.

The effects of Welfare to Work were explored from a number of perspectives at the conference, including international precedents, and included personal experience and broader frameworks of action. This legislation is symptomatic of a system which makes decisions without any knowledge or personal experience of what it like to be a person with a disability or a single parent. As long as the voice of people who have lived experience is not heard, and government continues to make decisions based on economic rationalism, the system will remain ignorant to the needs of extremely vulnerable people.

*For more information on the conference, please see the 'Papers across Karin's desk' section of the newsletter.*

We are updating our image...

Check out our new, modern, trendy  
website @ [www.qdhc.org.au](http://www.qdhc.org.au)

Thanks to the lovely people at  
Lettuce Create

### **A final note from the Newsletter sub-committee...**

Please get in touch with us if you have a contribution to our newsletter or story to share.  
We look forward to hearing from you

**Don't forget to return your AGM paperwork by the 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2006**

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