

# QUEENSLAND DISABILITY HOUSING COALITION

1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 167 Logan Road, Woolloongabba. PO Box 440, Stones Corner.

Phone: 3391 3433 Fax: 3391 3488 Email: [qdhc@qdhc.org.au](mailto:qdhc@qdhc.org.au)

Web address: [qdhc.org.au](http://qdhc.org.au)



## NEWSLETTER – December 2005

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

### *“So this is Christmas...”*

(Editorial by *Mike Duffan*)



Most of us believe (if we are honest enough to admit it) that happiness comes through getting.

Ebenezer Scrooge was unhappy not because of a failure to get but to give, and this, I submit, is the most important message of Christmas.

The baby in Bethlehem's manger was a gift, a present from a loving heavenly father to his lost and hurting children.

The end of another year is upon us... What an exciting year it's been for QDHC!

We've welcomed new staff to our organization this calendar year. Our 'not-so-new-anymore' Coordinator, Karin Swift, has settled in nicely and has quickly developed knowledge and links with other key players in the housing sector. As well as continuing with our current priorities, Karin has also started some projects of her own around linking people with disability in Gympie, the Gold Coast and Toowoomba with housing organisations. More of this work will roll out in 2006. Kaja Holzheimer, our administration worker, has added her own unique flair to our organisation and is a delight to work with. She is kept particularly busy coordinating the work of our office. Katrina Norton, our new bookkeeper, has been working hard since the new financial year and is doing a great job with the financial accountability side of things!

This year Karin and I got on a plane and traveled far, far away... to Perth, in fact, to attend the National Housing Conference. Elsewhere in this newsletter Karin talks more in depth about this Conference. For me, it was our mere presence that may have lead to a change of heart, of mind, of attitude, and even policy. We can theorize till the cows come home, but when a doorway width is too narrow to enable a person's wheelchair to

past through, this not only means physical / social exclusion – to my mind this is blatant physical / social apartheid!! This is exactly why the presence and involvement of people with disabilities have to be fostered, nurtured and enhanced – not until then can we even attempt to begin to “**break down the barriers**”!!!

I would like wish that we all experience true peace, especially at this time!!!

PEACE!!

*Mike Duggan*  
Chairperson

---

## ***AGM Rolls Around Once Again***

Members and interested allies of QDHC gathered together recently at the Spinal Injuries Association on the 12 October to take part in the Annual General Meeting of QDHC. The AGM always provides a good opportunity for staff and committee of QDHC to touch base with the wider membership of QDHC and our allies.

This being a year of new staff for QDHC made the AGM all the more special (and a little nerve-racking for first time Coordinators). We were honoured to have our wonderful Administration worker, Kaja, who is also a professional Opera singer, perform for us.

It is also a time where new people are welcomed into the organisation, and more specifically the Management Committee. This year we are delighted to welcome Catherine Smith to the Management Committee. Catherine brings with her a wealth of experience and her enthusiasm makes her a welcome addition to the Management Committee:

### ***Catherine Smith, Committee Member***

Hi, my name's Catherine and I've recently joined QDHC as a Committee Member. I've lived in public housing for 2 ½ years. I spend my time looking after my cat and my mental health. I have a personal interest in housing and mental health issues. I am also on the management committee of Speaking Up For You (SUFY), an individual advocacy organisation for people with disability in Brisbane. I enjoy social times with friends and family and I am looking forward to swimming this summer. I hope you all have a lovely holiday season.

Copies of our Annual Report for 2004-2005 are available by contacting Karin or Kaja at the office on 3391 3433 or via email [qdhc@qdhc.org.au](mailto:qdhc@qdhc.org.au). For those of you who were unable to join us at the AGM, we include here a copy of our President, Mike Duggan's address:

It is with much pleasure and immense honour that I present my fourth, and the Organisation's seventeenth President's Report of Queensland Disability Housing Coalition!

*The unsustainability of our world is directly proportional to paper-thin tolerance of its most vulnerable people.*

*The sustainability of our future world is directly proportional to the degree that vulnerability, dependence and relationship are central in private and public life now.*

**Unknown Author**

The Queensland Disability Housing Coalition has the following as its core aims:

- To bring together a diverse group of people with a range of disabilities, and others, seeking to ensure a choice of affordable housing options of people with disabilities
- To promote the rights of people with disabilities to live as part of the community in housing which suits their individual needs
- To develop policies and strategies to enhance and extend the provision of housing
- To promote the provision of adequate and coordinated support services required by people with a disability living in the community
- To raise community awareness, understanding and knowledge of housing needs of people with disabilities through research, negotiation and community education.

Everyone has a right to housing. The right to live where you choose, to raise a family, to own a home - in dignity and without fear of discrimination - is a fundamental right guaranteed to all. It cannot be denied to anyone because of race, colour, national origin, religion, gender, familial status, or disability.

*A community is best defined as a group of two or more people who, regardless of the diversity of their backgrounds (social, spiritual, educational, ethnic, economic, political, etc) have been able to accept and transcend their differences, enabling them to communicate effectively and openly and to work together towards goals identified as being for their common good!*

**Kate Chapman**

*When we are part of a vital community,  
there is a sense of ownership,  
a sense of place,  
and a sense of belonging to that place.*

**Michelle Clark**

This year, as always, QDHC has continued to develop and strengthen our ongoing commitment to providing a mechanism for people with a disability to have a **voice** on issues pertaining to housing – for instance, homelessness, accessibility, appropriateness and affordability of housing.

*“A home provides a sense of place and belonging, and is an important requirement for people to live full and satisfying lives. While the private housing market continues to meet the requirements of the majority of Queenslanders, governments have an important role to ensure that those people who cannot access private rental or home ownership can enjoy good housing”*

## **(These words are part of Minister Swarten's message in the Department of Housing Strategic Plan 2002-2007)**

*The Queensland Government will seek to ensure that all Queenslanders have access to safe, secure, appropriate and affordable housing in diverse, cohesive and sustainable communities. (The Queensland Government Housing Policy – Improving People's Lives Through Housing)*

If we juxtapose the core aims of our Organisation with these words of the Minister and the Departments policy documents, it would seem that we are on similar wave lengths. However, with the continuing diminishing of resources and the growing demand for all forms of affordable housing we need to reflect on what the reality has become for many people, particularly people with a disability. It is thus appropriate to look at the reality and the challenges faced by people with a disability and any organisation that has as its aim the betterment of opportunities for people with a disability to live as contributing members of the community.

Some ponderings on this would subsequently include:

- The proposed changes to access to social housing. How will these affect people with a disability? The barriers of affordability, discrimination and design will need to be addressed across the housing sector to ensure that people with a disability have truly unfettered access to housing of choice. Will the Government see a strategy developed for eliminating discrimination against people with a disability? Will Governments at all levels commit to the legislation of universal design across the housing sector so that access issues diminish?
- The challenges for organisations to revisit and authenticate their principles and objectives and stand firm in testing policy and program development against these principles and objectives. There is an increasing need for strong advocacy voices to ensure that ground gained is not lost.
- The challenge also for advocacy organisations to work together to ensure that their constituents are included and have their voices heard and represented.

Yes, the challenge certainly is to have our voice heard and be represented in all different areas. However, I truly believe that until we can firmly acknowledge and embrace one another's common humanity, there will always be those left out in the 'society's wilderness'!!

*If our common humanity is to be acknowledged and embraced, there must be forms of positive expression of it. This has to be manifested by:*

- *Upholding / Respecting humanity,*
- *Recognising one another's gifts and talents,*
- *Striving to achieve equality / mutuality in the practice of the social exchange process.*

## **The place of 'Home' in the lives of people with a disability:**

Some elements that make a house a home:

- Homes have real addresses rather than the names of facilities or groups;
- There are expectations of permanence;
- Leaving is by choice;
- Tenure should be protected by a lease;
- People have control over who can visit or stay;
- People have control over their physical environment.

Having a disability can make people feel alienated from other people and the world in general. This is why the place of “Home” is so important in the lives of those of us who have disabilities. It not only serves as an anchor, it also gives us a feeling of being in charge of our lives (or more precisely, a particular, albeit a very important, part of our lives). A sense of ownership and a sense of being in control lead to greater self-esteem and self-worth. In some regard we have a feeling we are on a par with our fellow Sisters and Brothers.

Having a “Home” means that people with disabilities at least have a ‘physical’ place in the community. We have to begin somewhere; until we are physically part of community, we will never achieve emotional / social acceptance. Thus, if de-institutionalisation is ever going to be achieved, a solid infrastructure must be established and naturally this has to be predicated on a solid platform of accessible, appropriate and affordable housing.

## **The Role of Support in sustaining that 'home':**

Firstly I need to congratulate the Department of Housing for its adherence to the precept of the separation of housing and support. Housing and support must always remain separated for the most desired outcomes to be achieved, sustained and maintained.

Adequate and appropriate supports are absolutely vital for people with disabilities to be able to firstly establish and subsequently maintain their home. The role of adequate and appropriate supports must comprise both formal and informal elements. I need to emphasise here that adequate and appropriate supports are not “the icing on the cake”, they are very much an integral basic ingredient!

However, ‘support’ must be just that – “Support”. Support adds value to a situation; it should never claim dominance nor control – however, this so often can be the case. I personally feel that not near enough research / wise thinking has been done about ‘supporting each other’, let alone providing specific supports to people with disabilities.

Tonight QDHC has much pleasure to present a Sneak Preview of our latest Project, “*A Home of My Own: Right, Rhetoric or Reality*”. This kit follows a similar theme of our other vital resources, of attempting to inform and empower people with a disability and their families to identify and pursue housing and support options that have the capacity to support a rich and sustainable life in the community.

Many thanks have to be extended to Dian Meiklejohn and Jan Dyke for their invaluable efforts in getting what we truly consider to be a vital piece of work to its culmination point. Thank you!!

## **In closing:**

I would like to thank the staff who have worked so untiring over the past twelve months.

Ann Tierney, our Project Coordinator until Christmas, has once again displayed an ongoing and untiring commitment to people with a disability in her work. Thank you, Ann, for your passion, compassion and utter commitment.

At Christmas, Ann left us to pursue other passions of being a Grandmother and 'playing with nature'. Fortunately for us, Ann has kept in touch, offering to be an 'informal sounding board'! Many, many thanks, Ann, for everything!!

Last Christmas, we welcomed Ms Karin Swift to our Coordinator's role. As her predecessor Ann, Karin finds herself constantly being torn between how on one hand, to best respond to the "call" of the Department, and, on the other, how we can support people at a grassroots level. To achieve such an accomplishment necessitates Karin keeping her finger on the strategic pulse, and constantly undertaking a very delicate balancing act. A sincere welcome, Karin, and "Thank you"!!

At the end of February this year, we welcomed Ms Kaja Holzheimer to the role of Office Administer. Kaja, your overall competency and your willingness and ability to "fit in" – these two fine qualities are very much appreciated! Thank you.

Lorraine Pearson has been our bookkeeper again this year. Once again, we sincerely thank you, Lorraine.

Finally, I wish to thank my Colleagues on the Committee for your time, support and drive. Thank you, one and all!

Many thanks to you all!!

PEACE!!

MIKE DUGGAN

CHAIRPERSON

12<sup>th</sup> October 2005

### **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...

- National Indigenous Housing Guide. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2003). Canberra: Department of Families and Community Services.

Phone: 3391 3433

Email: [qdhc@qdhc.org.au](mailto:qdhc@qdhc.org.au)

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

In late November I had the pleasure of travelling with Mike Duggan, our illustrious president, to the National Housing Conference in Perth. Oh, what an adventure! You can read all about it in our 3 page exposé on the National Housing Conference, "We came, we saw, we were heard". This quarter I've also been busy with the following:

QDHC has provided advice at the following forums/consultations:

- National Accessible Housing Research Consultation (Jaguar Consulting for Victorian Building Commission)
- QCOSS Non-Government Organisation Forum (Logan)
- Disability Studies and Research Institute phone interview re: boarding house closures
- Queensland Public Tenants Association AGM
- Homelessness Strategy Workshop (DoH, Dept of Communities)

QDHC has extended its knowledge base by attending the following workshops/conferences:

- Brisbane City Council Learning Circle and CityShape Conference

QDHC has made applications for the following source/s of funding:

- Residential Tenancies Authority Community Education Grant

**YAAAAAYYYYY!!**

QDHC has since found out that our application to the Residential Tenancies Authority was successful (HOORAY!) In early 2006, QDHC will begin a project working with people living in Toowoomba, Gold Coast and Gympie around housing issues. Stay tuned for further information in the new year about how you can become involved in one of these groups that will come together to talk about housing issues.

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT HOUSE SWAPS FOR PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS**

### **Q. Can I swap my home with another public housing tenant?**

Under certain circumstances you can! Two or more households wishing to exchange accommodation may do so with the approval of your local Department of Housing office.

For further information about this house swapping scheme, please visit QPTA's website:

[www.qpta.com.au](http://www.qpta.com.au)

## **TENANCIES IN REVIEWABLE PROPERTIES**

The Queensland Department of Housing has recently adopted a 'Tenancies in Reviewable Properties' policy. This policy states that tenants living in properties which have been modified to accommodate people who use wheelchairs, or which have five or more bedrooms, will be asked to demonstrate a continued need for this type of housing. QDHC has been informed that the Department of Housing recently communicated with some tenants who are living in properties that are reviewable because they are purpose built or modified to accommodate a person who uses a wheelchair.

These communications reveal some positive aspects to the Department's new policy. Firstly QDHC notes that the name for the policy is an improvement on its original name – 'Reviewable Tenancies' – which implied that tenants would lose their access to public housing if they were found to be no longer eligible for the properties in which they were living. Secondly, QDHC has also been informed that the Department has assumed that the household is eligible to remain in their home if the person with a disability is still residing at the house, and has not asked tenants to undergo medical assessments in order to establish their continued need for accessible housing.

However, the Department's communications with tenants also reveal some potential concerns for people with disabilities. While it is positive that the Department recognises that households may retain their accessible housing if a person who uses a wheelchair stays there frequently, there is no definition of the term 'frequently' in the communications sent to tenants. Nor is there any recognition that a person with a disability may wish to be able to visit their family when they have moved out, or may, like many people, choose to move in and out of their parents' home before finally establishing their own home. In addition, the Department's communications state that "The department will regularly review your household's circumstances to determine if your household still has a continued need for the type of property you are living in". There is no indication of how often and in what manner these reviews will take place. It is important for the Department to be aware of the fact that people's conditions may change over time, and that the long term needs of the tenants should be taken into account in deciding a household's eligibility to remain in a reviewable property. Otherwise, there is the potential for tenants to be asked to make repeated expensive and disruptive household transfers.

**Joanne Merrigan, Brisbane.**

### **INTRODUCING...**

#### **Katrina Norton, Bookkeeper**

I'd like to introduce myself as the new Bookkeeper at QDHC. I've been working here since July 2005 and would like to thank everyone for welcoming me so warmly. I work on Wednesdays from 2pm till 4.30pm. I have been involved in the community sector working as a bookkeeper for 10 years and also enjoy working for Romero Centre and Australian Young Christian Workers. I have a daughter, Jacqueline, who is 10 years old and I am also currently getting ready to be married to Tony on 11<sup>th</sup> February next year. So I hope your Christmas Season and New Year are as exciting as mine.

# KAJA'S KORNER

## How would you like to receive your newsletter?

Hello Everyone! Well, it's official – I've managed to turn QDHC's newsletter into a pdf document – which means we are now able to email our newsletters out.

**Yaaaay!**

There are already about 30 people who will be reading these very words via email. If you would like to join the QDHC digital newsletter revolution, please email me at [gdhc@gdhc.org.au](mailto:gdhc@gdhc.org.au) and I will be happy to add you to our email-out list. It is also possible to receive 2 copies of the QDHC newsletter - 1 via email and 1 via Australia Post. If this option appeals to you, please ensure you tell me that when you email me.

If you're happiest continuing to receive your newsletter via Australia Post, you don't have to do anything. We will continue to send newsletters to everyone via Australia Post UNLESS they request an email newsletter.

Happy Christmas wishes to all!

-Kaja Holzheimer

## INDIVIDUAL "HOUSING" STORY

Many thanks to Joanne who shared her experience with everyone in the last newsletter. We've had some interesting feedback from her article and are in the process of following up with some of those folk in the hope we can bring you one of their stories in next edition.

We'd like to encourage any of our readers who are willing to share their experience to jot something down and send it to us. You may be a person with a disability yourself, have someone in your family who has a disability or maybe you've supported a friend who has a disability to go through the process of finding somewhere to live and setting up their own home.

We are more than happy to follow-up with you and work together on a newsletter article. Your story might focus on

- your particular housing needs
- positive or negative experiences of looking for, fighting for, building or modifying housing (whether it be in the public or private sector)
- issues you think your individual experience highlights that still have lots of work done on them by Government, QDHC, the housing industry and the whole community.

We look forward to hearing from you!

*As reported in our last newsletter, we found out from Queensland Public Tenants Association information about time limited tenancies that the Department plans to implement from January 2006. Below is an article from QPTA which gives more information about how these changes will roll out. At this stage current tenants will not be affected by this change. Thanks to our friends at QPTA for keeping us in the loop.*

---

## **Time limited tenancies**

As of January 2006 new tenants will be offered public housing on the basis of need for a set period of time. These will be lifetime leases with a review period of either 4 or 10 years.

The Department has stated that tenants will be reviewed at the end of their lease period to see if their circumstances have changed. If there is a permanent long-term improvement these people will be offered other housing assistance/opportunities. Some people may be asked to leave public housing, and will be given up to 12 months to leave.

The Department believes that this review process will not mean that many will be asked to leave public housing because public housing is highly targeted to those most in need. These people may have no other suitable housing options apart from public housing.

These changes, QPTA has been told, won't affect existing tenants as it will not be made retrospective.

Some of the key questions for the Department, and QPTA, are:

What are the factors of need that will determine who is eligible for public housing?  
What are the assessment processes?  
What are alternative products that could be offered to people if they are going to be asked to leave?

QPTA discussed this issue at our August 2005 Face to Face. Some key concerns raised by QPTA Delegates included:

- Security of tenure is an absolutely key ingredient to the success of public housing in supporting people's lives. It is the security of knowing they have stability which allows wider involvement by tenants in their communities;
- While at this point in time reviewable tenancies don't apply to existing tenants, it is certainly possible that in the future they will be facing similar reviews to their eligibility for public housing; and
- New tenants, who are affected by these reviews, will become their constituents in the near future. QPTA Delegates in their regional tenant group roles will be asked for support from people affected by the changed tenancy status. Delegates feel they will again be placed in the situation of supporting and advocating for people in a two tiered public housing system (similar to the two tiered rent system, which was recently removed).

QPTA has written to the Minister for Housing on these new developments, expressing the concerns listed above.

**2005 National Housing Conference,  
Perth Convention Centre,  
26 – 28 October, 2005**

# We Came...

***They say that half the fun is getting there...***

It has been a while since I'd traveled by air and I'd almost forgotten how fun it is to get in one of those aircraft wheelchairs (the size of a pincushion) and then watch on nervously as well-meaning airport staff prepare your very expensive (partially MASS funded, and not covered for repairs once you take it out of sunny Queensland) wheelchair for flight. On this occasion this involved disconnecting the batteries and wrapping the connections in enough gaffer tape to silence the entire community sector! It also involved lowering the seat so that the wheelchair met certain height requirements... Thankfully we had Bill (Mike's support worker) with us and he was able to step in and do what needed to be done (I think they even offered him a job!)

Once on the aircraft my anxiety over my wheelchair was replaced by an anxiety of developing deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Five and a bit hours is an awfully long time to sit in an economy class seat and about an hour into the flight it occurred to me that DVT might be a real issue so I began to do periodic bursts of movement, including swinging my legs up and down and then from side to side and leaning from one side to the other. I continued doing this throughout the flight despite the weird looks I was occasionally getting from the guy in the next seat.

Upon our arrival to Perth it became obvious that this town's Maxi Taxis weren't big enough for the two of us (and most drivers had no idea how to secure two people in wheelchairs in their vans). The guy taking us to the Conference Opening at the Fremantle Prison (yep that's right, the opening for a Housing Conference took place in a disused Prison!) took over 45 minutes to secure us in the cab. We also learnt during our stay in Perth that having a cab booked does not necessarily guarantee that one will turn up. The day I was leaving, I rang the cab company after waiting for my booking for 15 minutes and was told that as they were unable to book a cab for the job when I booked it the previous day, there was no guarantee a cab would come at all. Luckily after some exasperated words from me, one was quickly dispatched and got me to the airport on time.

Despite checking the hotel's accessibility on numerous occasions, I sadly yet somehow not surprisingly found out that the doorway to the hotel room was both at an awkward angle and too narrow to get my wheelchair inside. Luckily my trusty commode chair came to the rescue and I was able to use this inside the room. This meant, however, apart from being asleep at night, I was only able to be in the room when my support workers (outsourced from a local Perth agency) were there. Thank goodness for the hotel bar!

**2005 National Housing Conference,  
Perth Convention Centre,  
26 – 28 October, 2005**

# ... We Saw ...

## ***The future looks bleak, my friends...***

Much of the conference focussed on the current and future crises in the over-stretched social housing system. It is anticipated that these crises will impact on the private housing market with home ownership becoming something that happened in grandad's day for generation Y and beyond.

The conference had four broad themes. These were:

- Marketing and Policy Responses to Changing Socio-Demographics
- Planning and Designing for Diversity
- Meeting the Needs of Indigenous Australians
- Challenges for Public and Community Housing

On the first afternoon I attended a CEOs forum. Director Generals from WA, Vic, NSW, SA and Qld gave presentations on the future of public housing in their respective states. The general picture across all of the presentations is that public housing will now only be a housing option for those in most critical need and for those with most complex needs. While it is positive that people with multiple needs will get housing, there are some fundamental flaws when an already stretched system ends up catering only to people at the highest level of crisis. Meanwhile those people at lower levels of need move up to the higher levels whilst waiting for a response. This means that more people will end up in a crisis situation at some point, and indeed, almost need to be at a level of crisis before their needs are met. Hence this system becomes reactive instead of proactive. It is also concerning that with this tiered system public housing will become housing of last resort rather than housing of choice.

We also attended sessions concerning the welfare to work reforms, the impact that these reforms will have on the housing sector and the link between housing assistance and economic participation. These presentations highlighted three disturbing facts. 1. People may be pushed out of social housing as a result of forced economic participation; 2. People may be forced into taking low paid, menial jobs; and 3. People who genuinely want assistance with employment may be pushed out of the system because they fail to meet strict work capacity tests.

We also attended an afternoon session on Universal Design. It was wonderful to see what is happening elsewhere, both in this country and around the globe, in terms of universal design. We heard from a speaker who commented on trends in Universal Housing Design in the UK, Canada, the US and Norway.

*2005 National Housing Conference,  
Perth Convention Centre,  
26 – 28 October, 2005*

# ... We were heard!

## *The rights, rhetoric & reality of housing and support...*

The main reason for going to the National Housing Conference was to have a voice there and to ensure that our voice was heard! Earlier on in the year QDHC submitted an abstract for a paper about separating housing and support and about why for so many people with disability, an ordinary life seemed out of reach. Much of this work had come from an earlier piece of work around information that young people and their families need when moving out of the family home.

QDHC soon found out that the Abstract had been successful and were asked to present a paper. We spent a lot of time refining our presentation and even had a dress rehearsal (giving the paper at the AGM). Finally after many months of writing, planning and negotiating with conference people, our paper was ready and we were ready to present it.

Our paper was presented as part of a concurrent workshop session where a series of papers were presented at the same time under the various conference themes. The theme of our session was 'Supporting the Disability Sector' and two other people presented papers about various housing and disability support models.

The session was attended by about 70 delegates. We attempted to deliver a fairly realistic picture of what was going on for people with disability in Queensland. We discussed the types of housing people lived in as well as the models of support people often had to accept. We highlighted current problems that exist in the sector such as vacancy management (the practice of housing and supporting people according to a vacancy) and the fact that there is not enough funding to support everyone on an individual basis.

Participants seemed to resonate with our presentation and there was much discussion after our paper about how things were similar in other states. Many people came up to Mike and I after the presentation and thanked us for speaking with honesty about the current housing situation for many people with disability.

Personally, I felt it was a powerful advocacy experience to have two people with obvious physical disabilities travel across the country to give a realistic presentation of what housing and support means for people with disability. We made several contacts with people from other states and although it seems we are a one-of-a-kind organisation, I felt it was a valuable experience to speak at a conference with a national perspective and have our voice heard alongside other key social housing organisations in Australia.

- Karin Swift

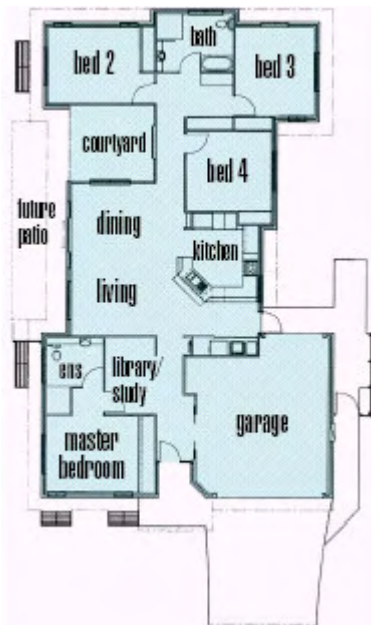
## Universal Design in Narangba

Wow, it's true! Blu Sky Developments have taken on board the principles of Universal Design, and have recently completed two universally designed 4 bedroom houses in an emerging community at Narangba under the slogan *Flexible homes for a Lifetime of Living*.

A recent insert in the Courier Mail states:

The company's houses have 920mm door openings, open-plan living, no steps, spacious bathrooms, kitchen benchtops at standing height with pull-out sections for use at sitting height, consistent location of light switches, internal access to circuit breakers, 12mm ply wall linings to bathrooms for future handrails/ seating, windows operated from standing or sitting position, hobless showers and lever door handles.

Sounds good! Our increasingly well travelled coordinator, Karin & president, Mike had a look through one of these homes on 21 November. They reported that the home was indeed universally designed, but noted that it had no paving in the back yard (nasty when wet), and was miles away from accessible transport. Sigh. Please enjoy a small pictorial montage of their morning...



The homes are priced at \$425,00.00 each and are marketed around the 7 principles of universal design. The target market seems to be families who are looking for a 'home for life' and a 'home for all lifestyles'.

Extracted from the Blu Sky marketing information:

**Benefits to the Homeowner:**

- Physical restrictions due to ageing, childbearing and rearing, injury or illness are more readily accommodated if the physical environment is adaptable to individual needs.
- A wide range of individuals and families can occupy a dwelling cost-effectively and equitably over the life of the building.
- Residents will benefit from these features throughout their lifetime as their needs change.
- Residents can invite family and friends to visit or stay in their home for extended periods at short notice – regardless of their age or physical capability.
- Homeowners can expect an increase in resale value

The fact that homes are being built according to the principles of Universal Design and being marketed to the public at large is laudable. QDHC looks forward to seeing more homes of this sort built closer to accessible public transport, and within a variety of pre-existing communities.

- Kaja Holzheimer



**The staff and management  
committee at QDHC would like to  
wish our members and readers**

*Merry Christmas*



and a

*Happy New Year!*

