

STOP PRESS!!!!!!! **QDHC'S FUNDING IS UNDER THREAT!!**

In March 2007, the Department of Housing released a paper entitled "Changed Arrangements for Advice and Resource Services to Support One Social Housing System". This paper outlined that the Department was considering funding only one 'consumer' based peak and one 'provider' based peak. Currently all of QDHC's funding is coming from the Department of Housing, and therefore QDHC's existence is in jeopardy.

QDHC's work is to make sure that the voice of people with disability gets heard when it comes to housing issues – *your experiences, the reality of your day-to-day struggle to find and keep housing that you can afford, that suits you and that takes your particular needs into consideration.* And to help people with disabilities to know their rights and have some real housing options to choose from.

We try to get that simple message through to government at many levels, to the Department of Housing, to people who design and build housing, to people who own or manage rental properties, to people who provide accommodation services specifically for people with disabilities, to the general community.

It's a very simple message – but people seem to find it so hard to understand!!

QDHC has done this work for nearly twenty years. For the last six years, the Department of Housing has been giving us funding to help us to do this work. They also fund other organisations to be a voice for other groups in the community – one for young people, one for people on low incomes, one for people who are tenants of public housing, one for people who are tenants in the rental market. They call these organisations *Consumer Peak Bodies*.

But now it appears that the Department of Housing is saying they're not going to do that any more. It appears the Minister for Housing doesn't want to listen to a voice that is specifically for people with a disability any more – or the voices of those other organisations. The discussion paper outlines that he wants to listen to just one voice – one voice to tell him about what everybody needs. The discussion paper suggests that he no longer wants to fund these smaller Peak Bodies, he wants to fund just one 'consumer' Peak Body.

QDHC and the other organisations have just been told about this a couple of weeks ago and the Department wants to know what we think of this idea. They also want us to tell them how they can make this one Peak Body.

The QDHC Management Committee and staff (including some from the past) met for a full day on Sunday the 15th April to work out our response. Based on the values of QDHC we explored all possible reactions, responses and stances.

Our criteria were:

- Being a voice for people with disability in housing.
- Providing a process for people to be heard.
- Empowering people with disabilities.
- Providing information and education to the government and community through workshops and forums.
- Retaining credibility, being consulted and included in decisions by government and community organisations.
- Listening to people with disability who have housing issues, and community development work.
- Advocating for a breadth of housing options for people with disabilities.

We went through all the possibilities but we kept coming back to the same thing – **that one organisation can't possibly reflect all the needs of the different groups because they are so different.** And we feel very strongly that **the needs and experience and voice of people with disability are likely to just get lost or overlooked in the big picture.**

So that's what we're going to tell the Department - that we want the Minister to continue to fund QDHC to be a voice specifically for people with a disability when it comes to anything to do with housing. And to work with people with disability so that they know their rights and can make choices about their housing.

AN IMPORTANT ASK OF OUR MEMBERSHIP

You can assist QDHC by filling out the attached questionnaire and returning it to QDHC in the reply paid envelope by ***Friday 27th April***. Your feedback will assist us to develop our response to the Department of Housing.

It is by drawing on the support of our members and allies that QDHC will be able to continue to be a strong, vibrant voice for people with disabilities in relation to housing.

Thankyou

Management Committee & Staff of QDHC

WE NEED YOUR HELP. WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR VOICE!

Please tell us if you *agree* or *do not agree* with our direction.

I agree with the direction QDHC is taking. This means

- ✓ I want QDHC to continue to speak out for people with disabilities on housing issues.
- ✓ I want the Department of Housing to reconsider its idea about replacing all the housing advocacy groups (like QDHC) with one organisation.
- ✓ I think the needs and experience of people with disability would be lost or overlooked if it were left to just one Peak Body to represent everybody's needs.
- ✓ I do not think one large Peak Body can speak strongly enough for each of the different consumer groups who currently have their own Peak Body.

OR

I do not agree with the direction QDHC is taking. This means

- ✓ I think there should be just one Peak Body and that they could speak out for people with disabilities in the same way QDHC does now.
- ✓ The Department should go ahead with its plan to replace the existing Consumer Peak Bodies with one Consumer Peak.
- ✓ I don't think the voice of people with disability would get 'watered down' or lost if it is represented by one larger Peak Body.

Here is your opportunity to give us feedback and maybe a statement of support that we can include in our response:

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*Thank you for supporting QDHC at this time. Please return your completed form in the stamped self-addressed envelope by **this Friday 27th April**. This will enable us to incorporate your feedback into QDHC's response to the Department of Housing.*

If you would like to do more, you can write to your Local Member of Parliament, talk to others, or contact our office for further information, we would love to hear from you.

Phone: 07 3391 3433 or Email: qdhc@qdhc.org.au.