

41 Thompson Street
Gladesville 2111
2nd August 2006

Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Reference Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



Dear Sir/Madam

RE: INQUIRY INTO EFFECTIVENESS OF CSTDA

We are RASAIID - Ryde Area Supported Accommodation for Intellectually Disabled Association Inc. We are sixteen families who have an intellectually disabled son or daughter and who live in the Ryde district. We are in our fifties, sixties and seventies, and our sons and daughters range in age from 23 to 38. Our group was formed two years ago and our objective is to achieve supported accommodation for our sons and daughters in our own community and within a model which allows our adult children to stay together. We all believe that because our children have grown up together and known each other for decades, they afford each other immeasurable support and companionship. We wish to see these bonds remain unbroken, while allowing our children the independence of living away from the family home. At present, our dream is just a dream. Extensive fact finding and consultation have revealed a system unable to meet our needs, either now or in the foreseeable future. Although our families wish to contribute to and support our model, there appears to be no way in which we can make it happen.

This is why we welcome and applaud your inquiry. We would like you to discuss some fundamental questions:

- 1) Why does this country fail to provide supported accommodation for its disabled citizens when comparable countries manage to do so?
- 2) Is it fair or ethical for parents-carers to be expected to maintain their caring role into their old age and unto death?
- 3) Is it fair or ethical for adult disabled citizens to be expected to stay at home with ageing parents and have no experience of independence, their own home or life with their peer group?
- 4) Is it within the capacity of the states to provide the supported accommodation we need so urgently and desperately?

It is the belief of our group that the NSW State Government is doing what it can, and that the premier's pledge of one billion dollars will start to address some of the most critical need. However, it is to the Federal Government that we look to contribute to the solution to the crisis in supported accommodation in our state and every other. We would like to see the disability sector taken over by the Federal Government, as aged care is, or at least a joint funding arrangement put in place, as now happens with advocacy.

Our families together have done a total of five hundred years of caring. We have contributed tens of millions of dollars to the economy and it has been our pleasure and privilege to care for our disabled sons and daughters up to this point. It is now time for us to enjoy some experience of retirement while they explore the wider world in preparation for the time when we are no longer here. Imagine our frustration and anger when we learn that the reward for caring for decades is an expectation that we will keep caring even longer. Several of our members have failing health, several care in conditions that would not meet OH&S standards, one family is already in crisis and all suffer from an overwhelming sense of exploitation and abandonment.

We look forward hopefully to your inquiry that you may facilitate a more equitable funding arrangement and thus a more equitable society. We hope that through your review you will be able to bring about a climate in which it will be possible for us to realise our dream for our family members.

Lynette Allen
President
RASAID