

The Problem and a Solution

The Problem - Unmet Supported Accommodation Needs

The Toowoomba Intellectual Disability Support Association (TIDSA) incorporated in February 2004 as a volunteer, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to fulfilling current and future accommodation needs of persons with an intellectual disability whose aged/ailing family carers could no longer provide care in the home, many of whom are now in their 70 and 80 years of age.

*The Toowoomba/Darling Downs regional population is approximately 244,00, **3% or 7320 of which live with varying degrees of intellectual disability.** The TIDSA research report “An Analysis of Accommodation Needs of Adults with an Intellectual Disability in Toowoomba and Surrounding Areas”, carried out by the University of Southern Queensland is available at **<http://www.usq.edu.au/sciences/research/crrah>**. This report is the first such analysis in Queensland; it is credible and is widely utilised by government and non-government agencies within the disability sector. It is believed that the data therein may be reliably extrapolated to similar rural centres throughout Australia.*

Crisis Driven Support in Queensland

*Currently, the housing of this section of our community is the responsibility of Disability Services Queensland (DSQ), **a responsibility which continues to be crisis managed on a case by case basis.** Details of this predicament were submitted to the Senate Committee enquiring into the operation of the Commonwealth, States and Territories Disability Agreement (CSTDA) in written and oral evidence in 2006.*

*It should be acknowledged that awarding extremely costly, individual lifestyle funding packages to relatively few, dispersed, high support recipients is not only **not cost effective or sustainable**, but discriminates against the vast majority of disabled people who require only a moderate level of support to lead a fulfilling, active and happy life.*

An Affordable Solution

A degree of cost effective, centralised accommodation support facilities, embodying whole of community, best known practices and maximum flexibility is seen as the best way forward to relieve the present and mounting social housing crisis.

This would not represent a return to “institutionalisation” - an emotive, overworked, inaccurate and frequently misused term.

Rather, this approach offers a unique opportunity to purpose design a flexible, pilot project in this region of high unmet need for social housing, which could adapt across differing geographic and social scales throughout Australia. Economies of scale would doubtless reap benefits in reduced development costs whilst retaining the flexibility to adapt to local requirements.

*It is proposed that a **pilot cluster village accommodation project be developed in or near Toowoomba City**, initially designed to house people with a disability who require only a moderate level of support and who are generally mobile. Such accommodation could be 1, 2 or 3 bedroom (retro convertible) duplexes, with wheelchair access throughout via interconnecting covered ways on one level.*

Modules of 4 or 5 duplexes in an outward facing square or circular disposition **would afford privacy without exclusion.** This development would embrace best known practices in terms of eco-sustainability; for example, over walkway sited solar power/re-sale to the grid, on-site bore water extraction purification to potable levels, natural skylight interior illumination, sustainable native and produce plantings etc. TIDSA has already drawn many lessons from the Toowoomba Regional Council Sustainable Living Team.

Cluster or link supported accommodations have operated successfully in many countries for many years e.g. France, Canada, Ireland and the UK; the numerous retirement villages in this region bear witness to this.

Above all, this project would finally recognise that whole of life disability supported accommodation should be designed for the resident and not the reverse, as with the ad hoc arrangements current in the region.