



Hon Paul Lucas MP



Queensland
Government

Deputy Premier
Minister for Infrastructure
and Planning

Ms Francis Vicary
Network Coordinator
Community Safeguards Coalition
Suite 11, 7 O'Connell Terrace,
Bowen Hills QLD 4006

Dear Ms Vicary

Thank you for presenting your position statement "My Life, My Home, My Solution" to the office of the Minister for Disability Services, the Honourable Lindy Nelson-Carr on Tuesday 17th March. The Premier has asked that I respond to the issues you have raised with her office.

The Bligh Government acknowledges that the matters contained in that position statement are consistent with several other stakeholders' views in the sector, such as the Disability Alliance and Queensland Parents for People with a Disability.

It has never been this Government's intention or policy to impose unsatisfactory accommodation arrangements on people with a disability. I acknowledge however that this issue has become a significant one for the whole of the sector. I'm advised that it has been the subject of strong, unified and passionate representations across the board.

A re-elected Bligh government commits to immediately engaging with representatives from the Coalition, the Disability Alliance and Queensland Parents for People with a Disability (and other interested groups) on this issue.

I assure you this will not be a "talk fest", nor "taskforce" or another round of research into the issue.

Rather, the commitment is that the newly sworn in Minister for Disabilities and senior management of Disability Services Queensland will sit down with the key representatives of the sector to discuss and find practical solutions to this matter.

We will be asking representatives to bring their suggested solutions to the table in detail.

All matters related to this issue will be up for discussion. I assure you that the strength of the message from the sector has been conveyed to the Premier and I, and a re-elected Bligh government accepts that there are concerns that need to be addressed.

Generally, the Government accepts that there is more to do in the area of disability services, however our long term commitment indicates we are definitely headed in the right direction.

Over the last ten years, State funding for the provision of disability services has increased from \$156.61 million (98/99) to \$699.25 million (08/09), a 446% increase when the inflation rate over the period was 36%.

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By contrast, the National Party policy on social inclusion contains an allocation of \$600 million for the provision on disability services.

This is a \$99.25 million slash to State spending alone. Depending on where they make the cuts, the \$125.9 million in additional Commonwealth funding for disability services looks seriously at risk as it's tied to matching State funds in key areas.

Worse still is the lack of understanding about the Home and Community Care program (HACC), an additional area of services to the disabled, frail and elderly.

HACC assists these people to remain living as independently as possible in the community with such services as respite, one-on-one care and meals on wheels.

The HACC budget for 2008/09 is \$386 million – of which the contributions are 35% from the State and 65% from the Commonwealth.

There's no mention of this key program area in the National Party policy – let alone a budget for it. A failure to make an allocation of State funding means the Commonwealth funds simply won't be available.

In all, I suggest it demonstrates what a risk an LNP government would be to the sector.

Thank you again for raising these important matters with Minister Nelson Carr's office. A re-elected Bligh Government looks forward to further engaging with your sector to discuss progress on these issues.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Lucas', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

PAUL LUCAS MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for Infrastructure and Planning