

BEAP ~ BYRON EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION PROJECT. Inc

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Submission No. 30 (homelessness legislation) A.O.C. Date: 20/08/09

11th. August, 2009

To the Secretary of the Committee;

Parliament of Australia

House of Representatives

Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth.

RE: Inquiry into Homelessness Legislation.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to have some input into the inquiry into homelessness legislation. Our organisation has been provided a service to homeless persons and families under the DOCS funded SAAP program since 1985. We are appreciative of the renewed interest in the provision of services to Australians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We are excited about the incentives and goals espoused under the new National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and how this may bring more resources and opportunities to resolve issues around homelessness and housing.

However, we are also hoping that as you review and renew legislation around homelessness that some of the principles of the previous SAAP legislation are not lost altogether. There were some principles from the previous legislation that were important and significant and remain relevant in today's social and economic climate. Some of these principles that we believe should not be overlooked are:

A basic right to appropriate shelter and support for everyone regardless of background or perceived cause of homelessness.

That services will still have the ability to provide a service that is inclusive and empowering to the client; flexible towards their needs; holistic in its approach and sustainable through the resources provided for service activities.

We hope that any new legislation will protect CAP properties from absorption into the general housing stock.

We hope that the scope of any new legislation will also include prevention of homelessness.

We appreciate and encourage quality accreditation schemes that improve the standards of services and their activities; however, please resource the sector with sustainable and achievable and realistic programs. Please make legislation that will ensure the government and other key stakeholders will fund and resource the sector and committed to their responsibilities. Please only utilise relevant and sensible systems from other sectors' accreditation schemes. Our budgets for

staffing are already minimal and difficult to cover the plethora of tasks and reporting to be achieved. Therefore any new complex accreditation scheme needs to be realistic in the scope of how services can adapt time and resources towards it. Alternatively, increase the funding and resources and training for the sector to be able to implement a very high standard of accreditation and accountability.

Please make legislation that ensures a commitment to resourcing the sector with sufficient finances to attract and retain a skilled work base of qualified and quality workers. Please keep the legislation goals in line with the reality of how the sector is financed and resourced to achieve these goals.

Finally and most significantly for our rural / regional area here in Northern NSW; please make legislation realistic around the limited and often dispersed resources and services available to homeless persons in our area. The legislation needs to address that not all services are available in rural areas; there is a significant lack of public and social housing in our area.

The limited work opportunities and housing affordability issues in our area result in more difficult exit outcomes for persons residing temporarily in supported housing. The high demand for limited services leaves many people at risk of homelessness and not receiving early intervention to prevent homelessness. Please make the legislation responsive to these issues and the various levels of government committed to making and delivering tangible programs that assist homeless persons.

Thanking you for your time and consideration of these matters and the opportunity to express them to you.

Yours Truly

Damian Farrell
Coordinator per BEAP Inc.