

**Submission
No 7**

**INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL, PUBLIC AND AFFORDABLE
HOUSING**

Organisation: JewishCare (Australian Jewish Welfare Society)

Date received: 17/01/2014

**The Director
Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable Housing
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney**

Dear Director

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission to the Inquiry.

As the largest provider of community services in the Jewish community, we are more than aware of the problems encountered by our clients in accessing appropriate and affordable housing.

Our submission which is attached has been developed in consultation with our senior managers across the areas of aged care, disability, children and family and mental health. As such we have a unique perspective on how this issue is impacting across diverse client groups.

I am happy to discuss any aspect of the submission and can be contacted directly on

Yours sincerely

Claire Vernon

Chief Executive Officer

JewishCare

Inquiry into Social, Public and Affordable Housing

JewishCare is the largest provider of community services in the NSW Jewish community and supports many thousands of people in need every year.

As our services range from support for children and families, those with a disability, people with a mental illness and the aged, we gain insights into issues across the usual service and social policy silos.

For many of the people we support, finding suitable and affordable housing is a priority. There can be particular issues in location as an estimated 80% of the NSW Jewish community lives in the Eastern suburbs where housing is expensive. For vulnerable clients and families they want to remain in this area for both religious reasons i.e. to be able to walk to synagogue on the Sabbath and to access informal and formal support networks provided by the community. A sense of belonging is as important sometimes as the housing.

For those people living in public housing JewishCare provides much needed support. This includes Friendship Clubs for the elderly utilising communal areas in the housing estates and the Factory in Raglan St Waterloo for a drop in centre for elderly Russian speaking community. These supports are all provided from the Jewish community funding as there is minimal government funding targeting CALD groups.

For some time we have had real concerns about the standard of repairs and maintenance in the Waterloo blocks as these have deteriorated significantly over the last decade. This environment has a very negative impact on the residents and they, our volunteers and staff visiting the units are exposed to public health hazards.

People with an intellectual disability

As models of support change with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, so models of housing need to change. It is understood that the National Disability Insurance Agency are releasing a paper on housing and accommodation early in 2014. Many organisations like JewishCare are struggling to plan for the future housing needs of people with a disability. The group home model has been the traditional model however self contained but congregate models are also becoming popular.

The problem is often affordability. For a person on a Disability Support Pension or a Supported Wage cannot afford the private rental market. JewishCare has commenced discussions with families on shared equity models but to date this has not progressed past discussion stage.

There have been a number of good research papers on housing for people with a disability notably *Housing and Care for younger and older adults with disabilities AHURi May 2002* although progress on the issues and findings is not known.

If the NDIS is not to include housing costs but only support costs, the issue of appropriate and affordable housing for people with an intellectual disability remains uncertain.

While we have not seen particular research, it would seem that adults with an intellectual disability may end up living with parents for more years than a non-disabled person of the same age – this however may be due to support needs or may well suit both parties, rather than because of the lack of affordable housing options.

There is also the issue of young people with a disability in residential aged care facilities or nursing homes, who would ideally be living in the community but struggle to find suitable accommodation and support.

As many of our clients age, they are needing to access aged care accommodation and many accommodation providers are unfamiliar with people with an intellectual disability and are unclear whether they need to include them in their accommodation or whether specific units will be planned. This issue needs addressing.

Transition housing

Pressure on public housing has many families facing homelessness. One strategy to respond to the need for emergency housing has been Transition Housing and JewishCare currently has a number of tenancies with Bridge Housing for families and individuals in need. While this is a good option short term the real challenge is transition to where? These families, often single parents and relying on social security will never be in a position to afford renting or purchasing on the private market and up to 24 months in Transition Housing seems to only delay the problem to be faced. Long term affordable housing is what is needed.

People with a mental illness

Many issues faced by people living with a mental illness are similar to those with a disability, including the challenges presented by NDIS.

We are very supportive of the HASI model where not for profit organisations receive government funding to provide support to people living in social housing. JewishCare utilizes this funding for a number of our clients.

JewishCare is aware of the Gladstone St Supported Accommodation run by Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW.

Aged Care

It is a fact that the aged want to remain in their own home for as long as possible. Aged Care accommodation has been greatly expanded by the development of Over 55 complexes however many of these are privately owned and make no provision for people unable to afford that option.

There have also providers who have taken the initiative to upgrade residential care however it remains contradictory that aged care providers can build large institutions with hundreds of beds bordered by security fencing, while similar complexes would be not allowed for people with a disability or mental illness.

New models such as www.grouphomes.com.au are exciting newcomers to aged care but are often not well known.

Social policy

JewishCare is aware of the work of the Benevolent Society over many years to progress the innovative Apartments for Life project. It was extremely disappointing that there was not support for this model and we understand that representations to NSW Government for support and funding were not successful.

A possible future area for social policy development is the concept of shared equity. A paper was developed in 2006 for the then NSW Department of Housing entitled *Shared Equity Models for People with a Disability* by Alt Beatty Consulting. It is not known whether the models developed in this paper have been explored.

Overall it is challenging to remain informed about any new models being considered and implemented across the government and non-government and private sector. There appears to be no central social policy centre in NSW that collates this information and it means that each organisation is often repeating previous work.

17th January 2014