

## **Transitioning management of accommodation services to non-government providers: frequently asked questions**

### **Update – July 2016**

#### **A quick update**

Since the transition process began in 2014, more than 140 people in 26 group homes have successfully transferred their services to non-government disability service organisations. Most people have opted to continue living in the same house with the same people. A smaller number have moved into a more individualised living arrangement.

The transition process continues on a house-by-house basis within small groups. Services are transitioned to a non-government service provider once people have made a decision on which organisation will provide their accommodation services into the future. All affected people have now started transition planning.

However, there are still many common issues that people may have concerns about. To assist, responses to frequently asked questions about the transition process are provided below.

#### **Do staff at non-government organisations have the same skills and experience as Commission staff?**

In the same way accommodation services are provided by the Commission, people working at non-government are trained and skilled to meet a person's individual needs. This is a requirement under organisations' contract with the Commission. Many organisations require staff to have, as a minimum, a Certificate III in Disability Services. People may choose to ask organisations what training they offer to their staff to assist them when making a decision.

All organisations operate under the exact same quality standards as the Commission and are independently evaluated, like Commission services, to ensure they are meeting those standards. The Commission has a rigorous process to establish preferred providers. A dedicated area is responsible for checking the organisation's financial sustainability, insurances, staff training, police checks and governance. All organisations must meet the National Standards for Disability Services. These national resources are available from the [DSS website](http://dss.gov.au) (dss.gov.au > Our Responsibilities > Disability and Carers > Standards and Quality Assurance > New National Standards for Disability Services).

WA has an experienced and strong disability services sector and the State Government has made investments over a long period of time to ensure organisations can provide quality accommodation services on behalf of the Commission.

### **What happens when the group cannot agree on a disability service organisation?**

Because all residents and their families are individuals with different goals and priorities, people who want to remain living together sometimes have different opinions on who they want their service provider to be. Families may choose to hear from these providers again to ask further questions and/or view more of their current group homes to help make their decision. A transition officer will assist families to work through the benefits and weaknesses of each provider until a consensus decision can be made.

### **Are individuals returned to the care of families, or houses returned to the Commission, if the transition is 'unsuccessful'?**

No, people will not be returned to live with their families if things do not work out with their provider. Similarly, houses will not be returned to the Commission.

If a person or family member is not happy with the type of service they are receiving from their non-government provider, they are encouraged to discuss it with staff and/or management to ensure the provider has an opportunity to resolve their concerns. All organisations have a formal complaints-handling process. If the person doesn't feel the complaint has been resolved to their satisfaction, issues can be escalated to the Commission's Consumer Liaison Officer or the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office, which is independent of the Commission.

People also have the option to change their provider at any time – funding packages are portable. Staff from the organisation and Commission can assist with this.

The Commission will continue to provide temporary and emergency accommodation for individuals in urgent and untenable situations. Commission staff will work with the sector to source a longer-term accommodation option in most situations to ensure the person returns to a more stable and viable living environment.

### **Will a change in State Government at the next election stop this transition process?**

Neither of the major parties in Western Australia has made a commitment to stop the transition process. The State election will be held in March 2017 and, although a few houses may not have completed their transition by this time, the process has been working well and is set to continue.

The decision to transition 60 per cent of the Commission's accommodation services aligns with the principles of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), which provides more choice and control for individuals. The NDIS allows people with disability to have a greater say in who provides their services and what type of services they want to access. The NDIS has bipartisan support.

## **What happens to the transition process if the NDIS doesn't go ahead after 30 June 2017?**

The WA and Commonwealth governments have publically announced that the NDIS is expected to commence rollout across WA from 1 July 2017. While the final governance and operational arrangements are not yet finalised, there is strong commitment to bringing the NDIS to all West Australians.

If you would like to contribute to a community conversation about how the NDIS will be rolled out in WA, you can participate in the engagement process being run by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Disability (MACD). To find out more, visit the [MACD website](http://macd.wa.gov.au) (macd.wa.gov.au > NDIS in WA Community Engagement).

## **I've heard that, in some situations, families will be bypassed and a guardian appointed. Is this correct?**

The Commission recognises that, in some situations, families may choose to opt out of the decision-making process and request a guardian be appointed. This can be arranged in discussion with a transition officer. Alternatively, families may choose to use an independent short-lister who will provide a consolidated list of suitable organisations. This process may help families to make their final decision. The shortlist provides suggestions only – families are free to choose any provider they wish.

In some situations, when a family cannot be contacted by a transition officer, the appointment of a guardian may need to be considered. The process is the same if a major medical decision is required and families cannot be contacted.

If you have any further questions, please contact your transition officer:

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