

Information about changes to Disability Services Commission accommodation services

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Overview to the changes ahead

- The Disability Services Commission currently provides 17 per cent of WA's accommodations services for people with disability – the remaining 83 per cent is provided by the non-government sector.
- From February 2014, some of the Commission's accommodation services will begin transitioning to non-government accommodation providers.
- This means that in the future, about 60 per cent of people who currently receive the Commission's accommodation services will receive these services from a non-government accommodation provider.
- Everyone who currently lives in Commission accommodation will continue to receive accommodation support services.
- The wellbeing of people who live in Commission accommodation is of utmost importance and every step of the transition will be conducted with the individual's needs a top priority.
- The transition will be facilitated by the Commission in partnership with each person, their family and/or key stakeholders and the non-government accommodation provider.
- The transition will begin with consultations with each person who lives in Commission accommodation, their families and/or key stakeholders about their future accommodation services.
- People living in Commission accommodation, their families and/or key stakeholders will choose which non-government provider will manage their accommodation service in the future.
- People may choose to stay with current housemates in the same house or move with them to another, or choose an individual option – in each case they will receive their future services from a non-government provider.
- Once the decision is made, the Commission will then negotiate with the selected non-government provider to ensure that an appropriate level of funding is available to meet the service required by the person in their new accommodation arrangement.

- After the transition, the Commission will continue to provide accommodation services for some people – those who need temporary accommodation, transitional accommodation due to a crisis or accommodation that supports people with highly complex needs.

Reasons for the changes

- The decision to transition some Commission accommodation to non-government providers is the result of a number of changes in the way the WA Government provides services to people with disability. These include:
 - **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)** – the introduction of the NDIS nationally signals a new era in the funding and provision of disability services. The aim is that people will have greater choice and control about the types of services and supports they receive. This change to WA's accommodation services reflects the changes to the provision of disability services nationally. Across Australia, governments are signalling a move away from direct service provision to coordinating, monitoring and funding alternative service providers.
 - **State Government approach** – The WA Government has been working to build and strengthen the non-government sector over the past 20 years, and providing significant financial investment in the last four years to develop high quality, diverse services that have the ability to meet a broad range of individual needs. This change in accommodation services delivery is in line with the way other disability services are delivered.
 - **Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy** – The State Government introduced the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy in July 2011. The policy promotes flexibility, innovation and community responsiveness in the funding or contracting of services to better meet individual and community needs. The changes in Commission accommodation services are aligned with this policy and aim to provide people with more choice about how and where they live. Over the last 20 years the number of accommodation providers has increased from about 10 to about 45, offering people a broad range of provider types. The changes to accommodation services mean that people can choose an option that suits their individual accommodation needs.
- For more about reforms to the way disability services are provided in WA, visit www.disability.wa.gov.au > Reform > Accommodation services transition.

The transition process

- Commission staff in a Transition Project Team will consult each person living in Commission accommodation and their family and/or key stakeholders to discuss their preferences for their future accommodation support services.
- A schedule is being developed for these consultations and the Commission will contact families in mid-January to advise when they will occur.

- In January 2014 the Commission will contact families and/or key stakeholders for people in houses that are to be the first to transition. The Commission will advise who will be assisting them and the expected timelines for the process.
- Once the person, their family and/or key stakeholders have decided which provider they want to manage their accommodation support, the Transition Project Team will work with the person, their family and/or key stakeholders and representatives from non-government providers to develop a transition plan. The plan aims to make sure the transition process is tailored to meet the needs of the individual or individuals involved.
- The Commission's accommodation service and direct care staff will be very much involved in the transition process, ensuring details of the individuals needs are passed onto the new staffing group and, where considered necessary, will work alongside the new staff while both the individuals and the new staff get to know each other.

Arrangements to meet non-government providers

- The Commission is developing a schedule to begin early in 2014 to introduce people who live in Commission accommodation, their families and/or key stakeholders to non-government providers.
- Commission staff will contact everyone in Commission accommodation about how and when people can meet an alternative non-government service provider.
- Alternatively, where families are already seeking information about the change, the Commission will support them to get the information they need. Early conversations may inform people about the sorts of services available and may help them assess if a particular provider will meet their needs.

Information about non-government providers

- Links to information about the 100, pre-qualified non-government providers is available on the Commission's website: www.disability.wa.gov.au > Services, supports and eligibility > Services and supports > Directory of service providers.
- Of the 100 pre-qualified providers, about 45 offer a variety of accommodation support models. Some of these are only offered in some geographic regions.
- Non-government providers must meet stringent conditions to maintain their pre-qualified provider status. This includes the same quality management systems and the same national standard requirements for services currently adhered to by the Commission's accommodation services.
- Most of the houses managed by the Commission are owned by the Department of Housing (DoH). Part of the board and lodging fees paid by people who live in the house goes toward the rent the Commission pays DoH.
- As part of the transition of service to non-government providers, the DoH houses will be transferred to an alternative housing provider. The new accommodation provider will confirm who the housing provider is during consultations with family members and/or key stakeholders.

- The Commission has asked each of the non-government providers to prepare an information sheet for families and/or key stakeholders that outline their services, including:
 - who can use the organisation's supported accommodation services
 - where the organisation provides supported accommodation services
 - how supported accommodation services are provided
 - fees or charges to be paid by the individual and what the fees pay for
 - staff expertise, training, supervision and support provided
 - how the organisation determines quality
 - what people say about the organisation
 - how people using the service are supported and assisted to adjust to living with new housemates
 - specific areas of expertise or service focus.
- Information sheets for families of people supported by the Commission will be available on the Commission's website from January 2014.

Accommodation services staffing

- It is inevitable the transitioning of people out of the Commission's service will have an impact on the duties and functions of various roles across accommodation services.
- The Commission is committed to working with staff and unions about the changes.
- Some staff affected in the early stages of transition will be offered existing vacancies within accommodation services and the Commission will support internal deployment opportunities wherever possible.
- Some staff may decide to seek employment with a non-government accommodation provider.

Next steps

- In mid-January, 2014, a letter will be sent to the individuals who live in Commission accommodation, their families and/or key stakeholders that are to be the first to transition, to introduce them to the Transition Project Team.
- Another letter will go to all other families and/or key stakeholders to provide an update of the next steps for them in the process.

Wendy Cox
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