

# Disgusting Inequity by DHS Victoria

The Age, Thursday, May 23, 2013

My brother, who has a range of disabilities, has lived most of his life in state care. For many years he lived a very institutional life, sleeping in a large dormitory, wearing communal clothes. Under government policy he was de-institutionalised in the early 1990s and moved into community housing.

In the recent Victorian budget, hundreds of disabled people, living in state care, were asked to fund a rent increase of up to \$5000 a year, effective December 2013. The increase is being used to fund additional places in state care. To date, the community response has been muted and the silence of advocacy groups astounding. Once the rent increase applies, my brother will be left with \$100 a week for pharmacy, lunch, clothing, toiletries, school fees, transport and social outings.

While many Victorians were thrilled at seeing an NDIS secured, the Victorian government is implementing a mean policy, dressed up as equity. What is fair about banishing more people to a greater level of poverty? Looks like re-institutionalisation to me.

Barb McLennan,  
Newtown, NSW

**LISA Comment:** There are two costs in supporting vulnerable people, most of whom have an intellectual or multiple disability and cannot care for themselves without significant support.

One cost is the service fee. This is that which pays the support staff. For each resident in a DHS group home, this is around \$128,000pa. This funding is from government block funding.

The other fee is paid by the resident from their disability support pension. This is for their daily living, for rent and housekeeping (food and utilities). At present this is around 50% of their DSP, allowing them to pay for their day services, medication, dental, pharmacy, clothes and some basic recreational activities within their ability.

For many years, the Department of Human Services has fully (service fee) funded its own group home services, but not similar services provided by non-government service providers. They have, therefore, been forced to charge their residents more daily living fee, or provide less support staff, to compensate.

People with a lifelong disability, which inhibits them caring for themselves, are being punished for being so, if they are expected to contribute towards their support costs – support staff wages. This was never the intention of the NDIS.

Yet this proposed DHS increase in fees, is clearly an attempt to have their residents contribute towards their support costs, disguised as ‘board and lodging’ - the daily living fee, which is currently adequate. No cost of living increase would ever equal a 50% increase on daily living in one hit.

We call on the DHS to closely examine its longstanding bureaucratic mismanagement and corresponding financial waste, fully fund the support costs for all supported accommodation group homes throughout the State of Victoria and leave the current daily living fee as a factor of cost of living.

This is a straight out cost of living tax by a state government on our most vulnerable people, and not the intention of the NDIS. The original intention of the NDIS being to provide support to the level of the person’s needs.

### **One of six residents living in DHS group home New Living Costs and Charges**

#### **Scenario 1.**

Pension; \$1700.00 pm	75% = \$1275 pm for B&L.	Remainder,	\$+425 pm
		Day Service,	-345 pm
		Medication,	- 40 pm
		Clothing,	- 60 pm
		Personal Exp	-160 pm
		Balance	-180 pm

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#### **Scenario 2.**

Balance	\$-180.00 pm
CAPS	+ 41.67 pm
Mob	+188.50 pm
Balance	\$+ 50.00 pm

#### **Notes:**

- The pension figure is that which appears on the person’s bank statement.
- The balance in Scenario 2 is the best, but is worse than a person in aged-care, where their balance is \$60 per week, not \$50 per month, or \$53pw inc. personal expenditure.
- Only essential items have been included in expenditure. It should be noted that the personal expenditure is that calculated by DHS staff.

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**NOTE:** We made it on to page 43 of *The Senior*

**LIFESTYLE IN SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION (LISA) INC.**

**Tel: 03-9434-3810: Email: [info@lisainc.com.au](mailto:info@lisainc.com.au) or [vk3qq@optusnet.com.au](mailto:vk3qq@optusnet.com.au)**

**Web: [www.lisainc.com.au](http://www.lisainc.com.au) : [www.lisa-aus.blogspot.com](http://www.lisa-aus.blogspot.com)**

**NOTE: We are always interested in feedback and information; general, specific, good or bad.**

**If you wish anonymously: Our mail address is, 73 Nepean Street, Watsonia, 3087**