

# Government Gag-Funding

## NGOs told they are right to remain silent to keep funding ([Link](#))

by David Hurst, Brisbane Times state political reporter August 21, 2012

The Newman government has been accused of trying to gag community organisations, preventing them from pushing for legal changes as part of new funding agreements.

A key union leader last night branded a condition that prevents government-funded community organisations from even providing links on their websites to other groups that advocate for legal changes super-sensitive.

It's about groups that represent often the most marginalised people not being able to publicise bad decisions of government for fear of losing their funding.

But Health Minister Lawrence Springborg's spokesman argued the government was simply making it clear that we want to fund outcomes but not advocacy.

A new website that contains articles critical of the Newman government's cuts, called [Rooftop QLD](#), **yesterday posted what was said to be an extract** from a funding contract signed with the state government.

Where the Organisation receives 50 per cent or more of its total funding from Queensland Health and other Queensland Government agencies, the Organisation must not advocate for State or Federal legislative change, an extract of the purported contract states.

The Organisation must also not include links on their website to other organisations' websites that advocate for State or Federal legislative change.

Queensland Health has historically provided funding to a raft of organisations including health service providers, charities, government agencies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health groups.

It is unclear at this stage which of these groups may have had the new conditions imposed and whether the rules are being applied by other departments, not just Queensland Health.

A spokesman for Mr Springborg last night confirmed conditions limiting advocacy were being imposed as part of the grants process.

It's now a clause that we apply, he told [brisbanetimes.com.au](#).

We're making it clear that we want to fund outcomes but not advocacy."

When we sign an agreement for a grant that's what we put in."

We want to fund outcomes. The dollars that are going into health are there to provide health outcomes. If we were there to fund political campaigning we wouldn't be the health department.

Queensland Council of Unions president John Battams said he had heard from a number of community organisations that they had to sign contracts that included clauses restricting advocacy.

You can't even have any links on your website to other organisations which may do so, he said.

I think that's outrageous; it's not about 'being involved in politics'. It's about groups that represent often the most marginalised people not being able to publicise bad decisions of government for fear of losing their funding.

Mr Battams accused the government of being super-sensitive. Community groups are there to serve their particular community but also to represent them and governments are elected to put up with criticism because decisions actually result in that from time to time, he said.

Non-government organisation figures were reluctant to comment on the matter last night, but a number of them said they had heard of groups having clauses restricting advocacy included in their new funding agreements.

The Newman government raised concerns about advocacy when it announced in May that it was stripping about \$2.5 million from the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities, which Queensland Health had previously funded to target HIV/AIDS prevention among gay men.

The group, which had a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender focus, spoke up in favour of the former Bligh government's civil union legislation and has recently criticised plans to ban same-sex couples from having a child through surrogacy.

In an [interview with brisbanetimes.com.au](#) to mark his 100th day in office in July, Premier Campbell Newman said QAHC had lost funding partly because of its advocacy.

Mr Newman argued the organisation had not improved HIV rates and they had become an advocacy group [and] we're not going to fund advocacy groups.

**LISA Comment:** Fear of funding loss and being sidelined keeps all who take, or are associated with those who take government funding, in-line. The 'word' from government departments is, "You must work with us! This means you must never, ever, openly question what we say or do!"

**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)**