

AMIDA NEWS

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December, 2014



AMIDA (Action for More Independence & Dignity in Accommodation) is a disability advocacy group that works on housing issues. This means we speak up for people with a disability or help them to speak up for themselves about problems they have with their housing.

Below are proposed changes to the Disability Support Pension which the Federal Government has before Parliament.

Alert....keep watching.....

Budget 2014-15: Disability Support Pension – reduced portability

Important Update: This measure is subject to the passage of legislation.

From 1 January 2015, [Disability Support Pension](#) recipients who travel overseas can only continue to receive their payments for a maximum of four weeks overseas in any 52 week period.

Disability Support Pension recipients will have their payment cancelled if they are overseas for longer than four weeks and will need to reclaim and have their medical condition(s) and work capacity reassessed against current impairment tables.

Currently Disability Support Pension recipients can be paid for up to six weeks for each trip taken outside Australia.

Questions and answers

Who will be affected by this measure?

This measure will affect Disability Support Pension recipients who travel overseas for more than four weeks in every 52 weeks on or after 1 January 2015.

When will this measure start and finish?

This measure will start on 1 January 2015 and will be ongoing.

People who have booked and paid for travel before 14 May 2014 (the day after the budget announcement) will be able to retain the existing six week payment period overseas as long as this travel is completed and they have returned to Australia before 1 January 2016.

The AMIDA Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday 14th October, 2014.

The following committee members continue for a second year:

Norrie Blythman, Luke Stone, Brenda Lacey, Graeme Williams, Peter Waters, Simon Chong, Kay Forstner and Ray Groves.

The two new committee members are:

Trudy Ryall and James Teekan

The guest speaker was Colleen Hartland from The Greens who spoke about the coming State Elections.

Please let us know if you would like to receive your AMIDANEWS by email. This would help AMIDA to cut costs.

Of course, if you do prefer to receive a mailed copy, we are happy to continue with this.

If you would like to change to electronic version, just email amida@amida.org.au to let us know.

Thank you to all those who have already contacted AMIDA to ask for AMIDANEWS to be emailed

Raising Our Voices

Raising Our Voices Radio show on 3CR
2nd Wednesday of each month at 6.00 – 6.30pm

Raising Our Voices is now podcast.

Go to: www.3cr.org.au and download Raising Our Voices to your computer.



Copies of the radio shows are available from AMIDA on CD or audio tape, website www.amida.org.au

**Accessible, Affordable, and Appropriate Housing:
The Market will not provide!
And neither will the NDIS.**

By Pauline Williams, Advocate at Action for More Independence and Dignity in Accommodation (AMIDA)

Ok I have to be up front and admit it right from the start. I do not believe in the invisible hand of capitalism. There is no trickle down effect and privatization never provides better services for less. (Did anyone really believe it would when a profit is now made on top of delivering a service). And here's the thing. I don't think many others believe it either.

That's why we support, (submit to) taxation and governments. They modify the excesses of the market economy so that we get something more than just jobs out of it. Because we are not all able to compete equally for a share of this wealth, we contribute some of what we earn to pay for the needs of our whole community. Governments then use this funding to provide what the market will not provide, such as affordable, accessible, appropriate housing, (71,000 units in Victoria). Public housing continues to be the most secure, affordable and accessible housing option for many people with a disability. It is also directly accountable to government, has transparent policies around eligibility and access and much is modified. However the Government is not expanding stock they are selling it off and privatizing it. (Albeit, to not for profit companies. They rent a % of government funded stock to higher income tenants as part of their business plan).

The National Disability Insurance Scheme is a great example of the community finally agreeing to contribute our common wealth to respond to the unmet needs of our community. But those heading up the NDIS have repeated often that it will not be replacing the role of State and Federal governments to provide housing. (Bruce Bonyhady (2013 and 2014 NDIS conference and 2014 CHF Australia forum)
<http://www.ndis.gov.au/document/889>
<http://www.ndis.gov.au/document/388>

<http://chfa.com.au/news/presentations-housing-disability-and-ndis-forum-now-available>

The State and Federal Governments response to this however is to tell us, “The Markets will provide”. Government contributions to public housing have been on the decline since the turn of the century, and it shows.

So has the market provided affordable housing? No. We have just had a Senate inquiry into the crisis in housing affordability. Has the market provided accessible housing? No. Five years after the voluntary code for accessible housing we achieved less than 1% accessibility in new builds when the target was 25% by the end of 2013. Resigning board member of Liveable Housing Australia, Denis Hogan, said at a forum in October 2013 hosted by Moonee Valley City Council that, “by all measures we have failed to meet targets.” And you can’t modify private rental even if you have funding unless the landlord consents. So has the market provided appropriate housing for people with a disability? No. The privately run for profit Supported Residential Services in Victoria are reported on by the Community Visitors who identified 494 issues that affected the lives and wellbeing of people living in SRSs in this year alone and Community Visitors continued to document an increasing pattern of abuse and neglect, a situation they have been reporting for several years. (Office of the Public Advocate. Community Visitors Annual Report 2013–2014). A considered review of the markets response to housing needs would indicate that faith in it is misplaced. It responds well only to those who can afford to pay and this flies in the face of the notion of a National Disability Insurance Scheme based on need and a cohort of people who are the least able to pay.

With the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) being introduced there will be opportunities to improve many people’s lives but with all change processes there are risks. We must be active to make sure the new scheme doesn’t create inequalities, or sacrifice rights and principles.

Housing is a vital ingredient in all of our lives and good housing is essential to good health and happiness. In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (UNCRPD), this means housing in the community, with choices about where you live and who you live

with, having rights as tenants, security of tenure, disability modifications and affordable rents.

In Victoria in the next few years it is estimated an additional 20,000 to 30,000 people with a disability will need access to housing. (NDS Victorian election platform 2014) <http://www.nds.org.au/news/article/3272>
There is a danger that if the State government does not fund this housing it could lead to the growth of more congregate and segregated housing such as the Supported Residential Services in Victoria. These institutional models, are not compatible with the UNCRPD and should not be endorsed, supported or be welcome as registered service providers under the NDIA. There is a need for regulation, standards and monitoring as well as principles that prevent congregated models becoming the market response.

For the NDIS to meet the needs of low income people with a disability we need to be realistic. It doesn't require a leap of faith to conclude that if we don't insist on more public provision of housing the evidence of recent history tells us the private sector will step into this vacuum and provide a lesser standard of housing at a higher cost and at the expense of the rights and choices of people with a disability.

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AMIDA Committee and Staff wish all AMIDA members a very Happy Christmas, and a safe New Year.

December, 2014



The AMIDA office is usually open:

Monday 9.30 - 5.00
 Tuesday 9.30 - 5.00
 Wednesday 9.30 - 4.00
 Thursday 9.30 - 2.00

Please phone AMIDA for an appointment: 9650 2722.

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You can offer any comments you have on AMIDA Policy or Newsletter by phone, email or writing:

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