

AMIDA NEWS

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August, 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.

AMIDA Annual General Meeting Tuesday 14th October, 2014 10.00am – 1.00pm

**4th Floor, Hayden Raysmith Room
Ross House
247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne**

Lunch Provided

*Please contact us to let us know you
are coming*

9650 2722 or amida@amida.org.au

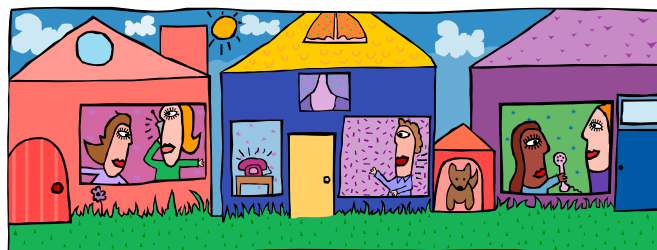
To Members and supporters of AMIDA,

The State Election is coming- Lets take action!

As an advocacy group for people with a disability, AMIDA and its members have an important role to play in raising issues about housing and especially as we approach a state election. We urge you to consider our recommendations which we are circulating to all political parties. If you agree, write to them. Ask for a response on where they stand. Information about how to contact politicians follows these recommendations. We have also provided an example letter that you can use and you can include any information you want from the newsletter.

We all need Good Housing.

Good housing is essential to good health and happiness. For people with a disability 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. It also means respectful support which is responsive to the lifestyle choices of individuals. There must be strong independent monitoring and accountability of services including avenues for support and information from advocacy of the person's choice. With the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) being introduced there will be opportunities to improve many people's lives but we must be active to make sure the new scheme doesn't create gaps in funding and quality.



Unfortunately the current State government is walking away from responsibility for funding housing and closure of large scale institutions in the wake of the NDIS even though the NDIS will not provide enough funding for housing or large scale deinstitutionalisation. The NDIS will not have responsibility for funding housing. It will not succeed if State governments fail to provide housing funding and we must not allow them to abandon this responsibility because of the implementation of the NDIS.

Community housing has grown in recent years and while it provides another option for people with a disability, Public Housing continues to be the most affordable, accessible and secure option. The NDIS will lead to a massive demand for housing and state Governments must increase the levels of stock not continue to sell it off.

On the following pages you will see our recommendations to all the parties in the run up to the State Election in November.

We are sending these to all the parties and seeking their response. When people write to politicians they can see that the issue is important to people so we urge you to contact them yourself in the coming weeks and months and let them know that people with a disability must not be forgotten. The NDIS is a huge step forward but it will not succeed without Housing!



Recommendations to all parties and candidates

As each institution has closed the evidence that quality of life improves when people leave institutions to live in the community has been demonstrated again and again. While Sandhurst and the Oakleigh Centre have budgets for closure, currently the government has made no commitment to close the remaining institutions although all parties say they support deinstitutionalisation. Much work and planning has taken place already and the state government owns Colanda and Plenty Residential Services. Responsibility for closing these institutions and providing community living options for all rests with the State Government. We need to finish the job of closing institutions now.

We call on all political parties to commit to providing funds in the next budget to enable all institutions in Victoria to close including Colanda in Colac and Plenty Residential Services in Bundoora.

A further emerging issue is the need for funding, regulation and monitoring of the housing under the NDIS as it is opened up to new models and private providers. The State government is walking away from its responsibility for funding housing because it hopes the NDIS will take over this role. But the NDIS will not be able to fund this stock. 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. 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 are profit making businesses, which house between 12 and 80 residents and operate at minimum standards, with no security of tenure or individual right to seek redress for tenants. This sector is currently unfunded but could register as NDIA service providers and access the funding packages of vulnerable people with a disability. We need to ensure mini institutions do not spread with the opening up to profit making businesses under the NDIS. There is a need for regulation, standards and monitoring as well as principles that prevent congregated models being registered with the NDIA for funding. Additionally the State Government must commit to providing funding for housing options that do not congregate and segregate people with a disability. The responsibility for provision of housing funding is still the State Governments and if they walk away from this, the private sector will step into this vacuum and provide a lesser standard of housing at a higher cost.

The State Government must commit to maintaining responsibility for funding housing and commit funds for affordable accessible and non-congregated housing options for people with a disability.

The State Government must work with the NDIA to ensure the SRS sector in Victoria does not gain access to peoples packages under the new system.

State government cuts to "housing information and advocacy services" for social housing tenants have led to more referrals to AMIDA from tenants with a disability. AMIDA has minimal federal funding and cannot replace these services. In addition there is very little if any disability specific housing information and support funding provided by the State government. With an additional 20,000 to 30,000 people with a disability wanting to access housing in the next few years, the need for housing information and advocacy will increase.

The State Government must fund disability specific housing information and support services, as they do for older tenants that assist people to access affordable and accessible, secure housing and establish and maintain successful tenancies.

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 is more adaptable for modifications. However the present State Government is not expanding but selling off public housing and land. This results in more homelessness for people with a disability.

The Victorian Government must commit to protect current levels of public housing stock and expand the supply of public housing for people with a disability.

The Victorian State government this year announced the transfer 12,000 public housing units to Community Housing Associations (60% of community housing is rented to people on higher incomes as part of their business model). Public Housing is 100% for people on low incomes and prioritises those in the most need, including people with a disability. Community Housing providers charge higher rents than public housing, they don't pay for disability modifications like public housing does, they are not transparent about how they select tenants or other policies affecting tenants and are not directly accountable to government.

AMIDA strongly opposes the transfer of more stock to Community Housing Associations and calls on the State Government to abandon this proposal contained in the New Directions for Social Housing Framework.

People with disabilities need housing that is adaptable to ensure they can live independently. Currently landlords in private housing have the right to refuse modifications such as the installation of ramps, rails and bathroom alterations. Universal design principles that have been adopted in public housing should be available in all forms of new rental housing.

The Victorian Government must introduce legislation that ensures new housing complies with universal design principles. Further, all landlords must allow modifications recommended by disability service professionals for people with a disability in new rental housing.

Landlords can rent a private property in almost any condition. This means people with a disability can have to put up with housing that may have no heating, insulation, draft proofing, decent foundations, plumbing, secure doors and windows or adequate appliances. Minimum housing standards must be introduced that provide basic health and safety standards.

The Victorian Government must introduce minimum housing standards into the Residential Tenancies Act.

Dear

Good housing is essential to good health and happiness. For people with a disability 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.

It also means respectful support which is responsive to the lifestyle choices of individuals. There must be strong independent monitoring and accountability of services including avenues for support and information from advocacy of the person's choice.

With the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) being introduced there will be opportunities to improve many people's lives but we must be active to make sure the new scheme doesn't create gaps in funding and quality. Housing is not provided under the NDIS and there is still a huge role for State Governments.

Please consider the following recommendations and respond in writing regarding your party's position on them.

- **All political parties must commit to providing funds in the next budget to enable all institutions in Victoria to close including Colanda in Colac and Plenty Residential Services in Bundoora.**
- **The State Government must commit to maintaining responsibility for funding housing and commit funds for affordable accessible and non-congregated housing options for people with a disability.**
- **The State Government must work with the NDIA to ensure the SRS sector in Victoria does not gain access to peoples packages under the new system.**
- **The State Government must fund disability specific housing information and support services, as they do for older tenants that assist people to access affordable and accessible, secure housing and establish and maintain successful tenancies.**
- **The Victorian Government must commit to protect current levels of public housing stock and expand the supply of public housing for people with a disability.**
- **The Victorian State government must abandon the transfer of more stock to Community Housing Associations**
- **The Victorian Government must introduce legislation that ensures new housing complies with universal design principles. Further, all landlords must allow modifications recommended by disability service professionals for people with a disability in new rental housing.**
- **The Victorian Government must introduce minimum housing standards, including such things as heating, into the Residential Tenancies Act.**

Yours sincerely,

We urge you to contact these politicians in support of AMIDA's recommendations. You can attach information from the newsletter.

Hon Mary Wooldridge

Party: Liberal Party

Current Portfolios

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Community Services

Minister for Disability Services and Reform

Ministerial Office

Street Address-Level 22, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000

Phone-(03) 9096 7500 Fax-(03) 9096 3636

Email: mary.wooldridge@parliament.vic.gov.au

Andrea Coote

Party: Liberal Party

Current Portfolios: Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Community Services

Electorate Office

Street Address: 306 Bay Street, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207

Phone: (03) 9681 9555 Fax: (03) 9681 9792

Email: andrea.coote@parliament.vic.gov.au

Hon Wendy Lovell

Party: Liberal Party

Current Portfolios- Minister for Housing

Ministerial Office

Street Address-Level 22, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000

Phone-(03) 9096 0301 Fax-(03) 9096 8779

Email: wendy.lovell@parliament.vic.gov.au

Jenny Mikakos

Party: Australian Labor Party

Current Portfolios: Shadow Minister for Community Services

Electorate Office

Street Address: 319 Spring Street, Reservoir, VIC 3073

Phone: (03) 9462 3966 Fax: (03) 9460 8808

Email: jenny.mikakos@parliament.vic.gov.au

Hon Richard Wynne

Party; Australian Labor Party

Current Portfolios: Shadow Minister for Housing

Electorate Office

Street Address: 112 Smith Street, Collingwood, VIC 3066

Postal Address: PO Box 1474, Collingwood VIC 3066

Phone: (03) 9415 8901 Fax: (03) 9415 8918

Email: richard.wynne@parliament.vic.gov.au

Hon Lisa Neville -Local Member covering Colanda

Party: Australian Labor Party

Electorate Office

Street Address: Shop 1, Newcomb Central, 71 Bellarine Highway, Newcomb, VIC 3219

Phone: (03) 5248 3462

Fax: (03) 5248 5294

Email: lisa.neville@parliament.vic.gov.au

Colleen Hartland

Party: The Australian Greens

Electorate Office

Street Address: 75 Victoria Street, Seddon, VIC 3011

Postal Address: PO Box 318, Seddon West 3011

Phone: (03) 9689 6373 Fax: (03) 9689 6227

Email: colleen.hartland@parliament.vic.gov.au



Taxi Reforms - AMIDA received the following information from the Taxi Services Commission. Please contact the Commission with any queries. Contact details are at the foot of the page.

The Taxi Services Commission is rolling out a number of taxi reforms.

The reforms will result in substantially improved services for people with a disability. Over the past year we have been communicating regularly with our disability stakeholders to get feedback on these reforms.

Price notification starts on 30 June 2014. Taxi companies in country and regional areas will be able to notify us that they will set their own taxi fares.

Known as notified fares, the reason this is occurring is to encourage innovation and competition in the industry. It will also affect regional Victorians in taxi fares may vary. Details of notified fares and what you need to know can be found in a brochure which we can provide.

I am also more than happy to provide an information session on the reforms to your organisation - please let me know.

If you have any questions in regard to any of the reforms, please feel free to call me.

Kind regards

Jorja Skaltsas

Assistant Manager, Accessible Transport Services

Taxi Services Commission

Level 23, 80 Collins Street I Melbourne I Victoria 3000

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E. Jorja.skaltsas@taxi.vic.gov.au www.taxi.vic.gov.au

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

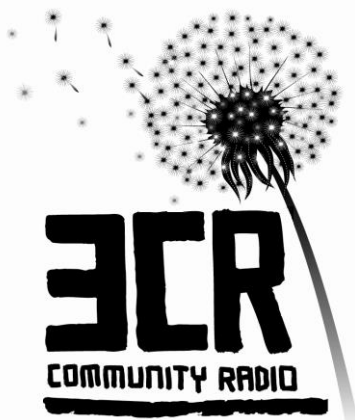
Raising Our Voices Radio show on 3CR
2nd Wednesday of each month at 6.00 – 6.30pm

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



3CR's annual Radiothon was from 12th – 15th June

This year AMIDA & Reinforce's 'Raising Our Voices' target was \$550. We achieved this. Thank you for making a donation and investing in keeping our show on the air.



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.

Email: amida@amida.org.au
Web: www.amida.org.au

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All information contained within is as accurate as possible and is provided in good faith – however it is not guaranteed.*

AMIDA receives funding from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, and the Victorian Department of Human Services.

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

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