

Thank you for having me here today.

At AMIDA we aim to advocate for a number of things:

- A wider range of appropriate housing option for people with a disability in the community. People have talked today about the lack of options and choice. Choice is really important. The Human Rights **Convention for Persons with a Disability**, which Australia is a signatory to, says that all people should have a choice about where they live and who they live. But predominantly the funded accommodation for people with a disability here is group housing, and none of the people who live in that housing have a choice about who they lived with and often not where they live as well.

We also advocate for:

- an increase in affordable and accessible housing generally
- tenancy rights in all forms of housing, and in particular at the moment in the supported residential services (SRS's). SRS's are privately run for profit rooming houses for people with a disability, and in that the tenure of housing, there is actually no individual tenancy rights. They are regulated by the State Government to a certain minimum standard but there are often lots and lots of deficits and problems in that form of housing. Unfortunately that's the sort of housing you get when the market decides where you are going to live.

So we advocate for a better form of housing and support for people, where they are respected, where they have dignity and where there is fairness. These are the types of aims and goals that AMIDA has. Our advocacy is about people's rights being recognised in:

- law
- policy, and
- action.

We provide individual, self-advocacy, family advocacy and systemic advocacy. The systemic advocacy we find is really essential as we really can't solve the problems one issue at a time. Indeed most the problems we find have a systemic basis. It is really important that we get regulations in place, laws and policies in place, or we can't resolve the individual problems, Although we do go into bat quite often to try and try and get the compensation started around fairness and giving people a fair go.

But I think today's topic is a really good example of this, that if, as we said earlier, if we build to begin with to ensure properties are accessible, or can be made accessible it's a lot cheaper, so if the regulations was in place so if we did that and systemic change as a community we could actually be saving money. These are the sorts of examples for why systemic advocacy is important.

AMIDA'S INTEREST IN ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

And why we are interested in particular around this issue?

If we look at some of the numbers:

- **4,200 people** are currently on the DHS waiting list, the Disability Support Register, and those are people who are waiting for accommodation and support in group homes. So it is no wonder, going from that, that if you are finding it difficult you aren't the only ones in that position

Those 4,200 people are the ones with needs for immediate need, so if you don't have immediate need DHS doesn't put you on their waiting list. We know the number is a lot bigger than that.

- There are **35,000 people on the public housing waiting list** and we know that public housing has been in decline. The Victorian Council of Social Services have said that in 1996 and 2008 the Australian public housing sector diminished from about 4.1% to about 3.7% of our total housing stock. If we compare ourselves to other countries, for instance Canada has about 6% of total housing is public, New Zealand 7%, France 17%, United Kingdom 20%. Our big sector is private rental. We have 22% private rental and unfortunately not very much of accessible private rental. IN fact I would defy anyone to find me an accessible private rental. I have people constantly calling me asking where can they go to find a place that is accessible and in fact there is no central point that registers that sort of stock.
- We know there is about **20,000- 30,000 with a disability**, with the NDIS coming in who will need housing. That is people who will receive NDIS who will receive the support but don't get the housing.
- The **community housing waiting** list is a big unknown. We just don't know. That information is not publicly available but we assume that they have people ringing them all the time too, and that there is a huge demand that is untapped in that sector as well.
- And as we said **minimal accessible private rental**. In fact that would be a fantastic reform, if we have in place that landlords had to agree to people making modifications.

At this point in time, a landlord doesn't even have to agree to you paying for your self-modifications in their property. They can say no. So it is a big area where systemic reform is needed to provide the door to be open to more accessible housing, even where people can pay, and with the NDIS coming in I guess people may well have the money but they may be renting privately and landlords may simply refuse modify stock or allow stock to be modified.

That's I guess why at AMIDA we think this is a really important area. We do believe there is a need for regulation and we would agree that if accessible housing was something the State had chosen to go ahead with regulating it would have been much much better and today, five or six years later we might have found ourselves in a very different position. However it is never too late.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOONEE VALLEY

TAKING THE SILVER STAR CHALLENGE

We could, and Moonee Valley certainly could, take up the challenge and encourage Council to get the silver star on every new house that is developed. I guess we are saying what opportunities are there are the moment.

AN ASPIRATIONAL TARGET & REDEVELOPING STOCK

We could for instance encourage a percentage of affordable and accessible stock in developments. There is an example I could give you, for instance the Boyd building which Melbourne City Council is developing.

That building which is in South Melbourne. Council is developing it as a community hub. So there will be whole lot of activities there. There are social activities, there are community activities, shopping etc, retail but also within it there are 42 affordable units and 17 of those are accessible.

This is something that Council initiated. They also bought the Munroe building near Victoria Market and are planning to do something similar there. They may well not own the building once it is done, they may put a caveat on it and just sell it on. It is the sort of things Councils do do.

Moreland Council has a target of 20% affordable housing, again, with the housing strategy being developed here, it might be something that Council wants to adopt, a target which says it is something we are actually going to try to achieve.

ADOPT PROACTIVE POLICIES ABOUT STOCK RETENTION

But also adopt a policy that with any redevelopment of public housing in Moonee Valley that it should be that there is always an increase in the available affordable housing and an increase in the available accessible housing.

In some other areas, Carlton is one I can think of, where there was a public/private redevelopment of public housing estate, and the net result wasn't any increase at all. In fact there was a net decrease in public housing on that site. So if Council adopts a policy where any redevelopment that goes on, for instance on the Ascot Vales Estate, should have as its starting point that there must be an increase in affordable and accessible housing on that site rather than a sell off to the private sector. Those are the sorts of things that Council could advocate for as well.

RATES DISCOUNT FOR SILVER STAR RATINGS

I'm not sure whether this is possible, but just thinking outside the box, is it possible to have a rate discount for a property that is accessible. I don't know? I know that you work out rates based on the value of the property but perhaps it could be a reverse value as if it was accessible and it would be more valuable because it is accessible, and you would get a discount.

But those are the sorts of things I guess, regulation is possible but if we had a few carrots to dangle as well to encourage developers whether they are not for profit developers or private developers to have a go at bringing in more accessible housing.

LOBBY

And finally I guess what Council could do, like AMIDA and other lobby groups is lobby both State and Federal Government that they need to continue to fund social housing and to set regulations in place to plan for our future so we can all continue to live in this community.

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I think today's topic is a really good example of the need for systemic advocacy, that if, and as we said earlier, we build to begin with to ensure properties are accessible, or can be made accessible it's a lot cheaper in the long term. If regulations were in place, if we did that and systemic change as a community, we could actually be saving money. These are the sorts of examples for why systemic advocacy is important.

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At this point in time, a landlord doesn't even have to agree to you paying for your self-modifications in their property. They can say no. So it is a big area where systemic reform is needed to provide the door to be open to more accessible housing, even where people can pay, and with the NDIS coming in I guess people may well have the money but they may be renting privately and landlords may simply refuse modify stock or allow stock to be modified.

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<https://www.dropbox.com/s/u9o4a2dait2136a/Final%20Crown%20Street.pages.pdf?dl=0>