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Maree Edwards, MP  
Chair, Family and Community Development Committee  
Parliament of Victoria  
Spring Street  
**EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002**

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## **Submission to the Inquiry into Abuse in Disability Services**

Dear Chair

### **1. Experience of disclosing or reporting abuse**

#### **What experiences have people with disability, families and carers had when disclosing or reporting abuse?**

- 1.1 VALID is Victoria's peak advocacy organisation for adults with intellectual disability who are in receipt of or eligible for State-funded disability services. It provides a state-wide individual advocacy service funded by the Office for Disability (DHHS).
- 1.2 This funding allows VALID to employ one full time advocate and a part-time advocate to respond to 200 new individual advocacy cases a year, or 50 per quarter. The cases are short term and issues-focused - i.e. there is a problem or issue confronting the person which VALID attempts to have resolved.
- 1.3 Our plan of individual advocacy action requires that we support the client to:
  - identify the issue of concern
  - establish what action or outcome the client requires
  - determine who or what body or individual has the power and capacity to address the issue
  - establish if the client is able to advocate for themselves or has other preferred sources of advocacy support, such as family
  - provide varying levels of support, either to the person or their family to pursue and address the issue



- 1.4 VALID does not have the capacity or power to resolve issues in its own right. One of its primary roles is to ensure that the issues are channelled to, and effectively addressed, by those who do have the capacity and power. For instance we frequently support people to channel their issues to generic bodies and entities such as Consumer Affairs, Human Rights Commission, the Police, Landlords, Local Councils, Taxi Directorate, VCAT, AAT, as well as to specialist bodies such as the Senior Practitioner's Office and the Disability Services Commissioner.
- 1.5 Consistent with our target group criteria (1.1), we are predominantly involved in supporting people with intellectual disability to pursue their concerns in relation to State-funded disability services. Typically, we initially direct and/or support clients to seek address at the most local level through *internal* complaints and grievance channels, directing issues to:
- Agency Managers, CEO's and Boards
  - House Supervisors
  - DHHS Managers
  - DHHS Corporate Integrity & Privacy Unit
- 1.6 We also frequently direct and/or support clients to seek address through *external* complaints and review channels:
- Disability Services Commissioner
  - Senior Practitioner's Office
  - Office of Public Advocate
  - Community Visitors
  - Ombudsman
  - Police
- 1.7 If the actions of these bodies or entities fall short of addressing the issues or achieving the person's goals, we may direct and/or support further alternative actions, such as:
- seeking support of local M.P's
  - referring to legal advice and support
  - ensuring public scrutiny (e.g. through media)
- 1.8 Through our individual advocacy work VALID has extensive experience in supporting people with intellectual disability who have experienced various forms of abuse and neglect, including financial, sexual, physical and emotional. People with an intellectual disability who have experienced abuse or neglect often have trouble working out where to go and who to trust and find themselves being pushed back and forth between jurisdictions, agencies and organisations. Typically, upon learning of an incident of abuse or neglect, VALID will:

- Support victims to disclose
- Help them to determine their desired action and outcome
- Recommend and refer to appropriate counselling and/or support (including legal)
- Develop an individual advocacy plan
- Provide required assistance, support and/or representation to achieve appropriate recourse

1.9 In our experience, without such individual advocacy support, people unfamiliar with the system or uncertain of their rights are often overwhelmed, confused and discouraged. Typically, people with intellectual disability may be reluctant to disclose due to lack of confidence, lack of understanding of their rights, fear of consequences and the lack of ability to express or articulate their concerns.

1.10 In our view many of the issues that are brought to VALID, and other advocacy groups, are not capable of being resolved by either internal or external complaints processes. They are endemic to a system that is both crisis-driven and crisis-producing. In many ways, the complaints bodies - along with advocacy groups - are left trying to bandage a system that we all know is badly bleeding. We believe all organisations involved in the safeguarding system have been trying to raise the alarm bells for many years.

1.11 VALID's experience is that people with an intellectual disability are often reluctant to disclose or report abuse because they feel vulnerable, exposed and unsupported. We agree that in many cases this is due to the fragmentation and complexity of the reporting system, as identified in the Victorian Ombudsman's report:

*'The overwhelming conclusion of this investigation is that despite areas of good practice, oversight arrangements in Victoria are fragmented, complicated and confusing, even to those who work in the field. As a result there is a lack of ownership of the problem and little clarity about who is responsible for what. In some areas there are overlapping responsibilities between agencies and no clear understanding of the boundaries. In others there are legislative barriers to sharing information or jurisdictional gaps. Thus problems are regularly raised – including by many well-meaning players in the system – but rarely fixed... This means that the system is fundamentally failing to deliver protection in a coherent and consistent way. If these arrangements are confusing to people well versed in the system, how much more confusing they must be to the public, including people with disabilities.'*

1.12 VALID believes the many failings of the disability service system - particularly in accommodation and support - have contributed to a culture which has led to conditions in some services that are conducive to abuse and neglect. Over the past twenty years, despite overall improvements to the support system in many regards, VALID has frequently voiced its frustration regarding the inability of the various complaints bodies, DHHS management and successive Victorian Governments to satisfactorily recognise and address these problems. The record shows that we have stood up frequently and vocally, and have led the call for public inquiries and indeed a Royal Commission into abuse in disability services.

## **2. Human Rights and Safeguards**

**How can the rights provided under the Charter of Human Rights in Victoria be maintained for people accessing disability services in the transition to the NDIS once it has been fully rolled out?**

- 2.1 The State Government must retain its responsibility to ensure that Victoria is working towards becoming a fully inclusive, safe and supportive community for people with a disability.
- 2.2 The transition to the NDIS should be regarded as primarily a transfer of funding arrangements. It should not be regarded as a transfer to the NDIA of the State Government's responsibility for ensuring that people with a disability enjoy the rights and responsibilities afforded them as citizens under the Victorian Charter.
- 2.3 For people eligible for Tier 3 specialist disability supports - who will transfer from being DHHS clients to NDIS participants - as well as for people with a disability deemed ineligible for Tier 3 supports, the State must continue its leadership role in developing and supporting inclusive communities. E.g. maintaining the Disability Act's requirements for Disability Action Plans and driving cross-sectoral address of disability issues.
- 2.4 The Information, Linkages and Capacity -Building (ILC) framework, formerly known as Tier 2, provides a wonderful catalyst for building a more supportive society, but it will only be successful if it is designed and implemented through partnerships between: NDIA and the State; Disability Support Organisations and provider organisations; local communities and people with a disability.
- 2.5 The Victorian Government should continue to fund advocacy services and increase their capacity to respond to issues of abuse and neglect as well as issues arising from the transition to NDIS, until such time as a more suitable national mechanism is agreed. (See 4.6-4.9)

## **3. Independent Oversight Body**

**During the interim period of transition to the NDIS from 2016 to 2020 should the Victorian Government:**

- **create a new body under new legislation?**
- **allocate the responsibilities to a single existing body?**
- **improve the integration of existing bodies to fill the gaps and address overlaps on the boundaries?**

**If the current safeguarding responsibilities were allocated to a single existing body, should the body be:**

- **Disability Services Commissioner?**
- **Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner?**
- **Victorian Ombudsman?**
- **Another existing body?**

**Should the state maintain responsibility for some elements of the safeguarding system during and after the transition to the NDIS?**

**If a single oversight body were established in Victoria what governance accountability and oversight arrangements would need to be established to ensure it is accountable in safeguarding people who access disability services?**

- 3.1 VALID supports the Ombudsman's call for a single oversight body accountable for dealing with serious incident reports:

*'Independent oversight body*

*In principle, a single independent oversight body should be accountable for dealing with serious incident reports involving people with disability. The oversight body should have the clear jurisdiction, powers and independence to effectively deal with these matters.*

*Its functions should include:*

*receiving mandatory reports of all serious incidents, including complaints/allegations of physical and sexual abuse, unexplained injuries and deaths, from all registered disability service providers, including SRS, DHHS, Community Visitors, OPA, the TAC and independent advocates .'*

- 3.2 The current situation would be greatly improved if there were such a body assisting people by providing 'warm' referrals (i.e. supporting people to get to the right body rather than just giving them yet another number to call), following up on serious incident reports and working across sectors. In our experience, abuse doesn't only happen in services. It also happens in family homes and in mainstream environments. It would make a big difference to a complainant's sense of security - as well as to the efficiency of the process - if they had access to an agency that works closely with Police and other protective bodies - e.g. transport inspectors, shopping centre security companies etc. - to improve the integration of existing bodies and to address overlaps on the boundaries.

- 3.3 We see no need to create a new body under legislation. During the interim period of transition to the NDIS from 2016-2020 our view would be that the DSC is well placed - given additional powers in relation to serious incident reports, own-motion investigations and cross-sectoral reporting- to take on the responsibilities defined by the Ombudsman. Beyond that interim period, VALID believes that Victoria's current safeguarding mechanisms - as imperfect as they might be - should be considered a minimum benchmark. We should not accept any system which represents a reduction in safeguarding. In areas where a proposed national system meets this requirement, and offers pathways to improve upon existing arrangements, Victoria should commit to participating in a nationally consistent framework; in areas where this requirement is not met, Victoria should maintain existing arrangements - and commit to improving them.

- 3.4 VALID's work in supporting people to make complaints brings us into regular contact with the DSC, while our experience with the other mentioned bodies is less frequent and of a different nature. If any of these bodies were deemed more appropriate, and if they were empowered to effectively take on that role, VALID would also support that decision.
- 3.5 For the record, VALID supports the DSC's emphasis on mediation and alternative dispute resolution as the primary response to the majority of complaints. While people with a disability and families often express to us that the softly-softly approach can be frustrating and inconclusive at times, VALID accepts there are usually different perspectives on any matter that need to be heard and respected. In our experience, the DSC's methods are highly suited to the majority of complaints, particularly those which might have arisen from or been exacerbated by the absence of respectful communication.
- 3.6 We are also supportive of the DSC's commitment to building a service culture in which complaints are regarded as a healthy part of the quality improvement process. The DSC has been sensitive to the barriers people face in coming forward, and has placed due emphasis on the need to educate and encourage people to complain and disclose. It has also worked hard to establish a culture and process which does not present as overly-formal or forbidding to people with a disability. E.g. Their use of peer educators - people with disabilities who go out and talk to people about their right to complain - is highly commendable and in our view has been highly effective.
- 3.7 At the same time, VALID shares concerns that the DSC has not used its powers of investigation to the extent that it both could and - in some instances - should. While we accept and support the DSC's practice of deferring to the Police in cases of alleged criminal abuse, we feel there have been missed opportunities to undertake separate DSC investigations into the systemic and cultural issues which might have contributed to the alleged abuse or neglect, and which therefore might have been of broader benefit.
- 3.8 We have welcomed the Ombudsman's observations and recommendations and have been heartened by DSC's commitment to improve its practice. For the past eight years, DSC has been advising services to regard complaints as a healthy part of the continuous improvement cycle, and these criticisms have given them an opportunity to practice what they preach.
- 3.9 Regardless of the benefits that might be gained from streamlining complaints pathways within a single body, it is our experience that many people with an intellectual disability will still require advocacy support to make and pursue a complaint.

#### 4. Disability Advocacy Services

**What would be the most appropriate approach to the administration of funding disability and advocacy service, bearing in mind there are both state and federal funding streams? Should an existing body or new body have responsibility for this role? In undertaking a comprehensive assessment of advocacy needs, what components of the advocacy system need to be evaluated or reviewed?**

- 4.1 Consistent with the views expressed at 2.1, VALID believes State-funded advocacy organisations such as ourselves have a continuing role to play in an advocacy system that safeguards not only people's rights as NDIA participants or service users, but their rights as citizens of Victoria.
- 4.2 VALID supports the intent of the Ombudsman's recommendation: *Advocacy services, and the funding of advocacy, should be independent of all agencies involved in funding, regulating, or providing services to ensure they can be truly fearless when standing up for the vulnerable.* We do not, however, support the Ombudsman's recommendation that funding for State-based advocacy services come under the administration of the Office of Public Advocate - even as an interim measure.
- 4.3 We believe that a move to OPA administration would carry similar perceptions of conflict of interest, given they are the primary provider of guardianship. There is certainly a case for moving to a more independent model of administration, but until such time as that is established we see no urgent case for change.
- 4.4 We are not aware of any evidence to support the proposition that the current arrangement - i.e. through the Office for Disability - presents a manifest conflict of interest. While we accept that there might be a *perception* of conflict of interest, given OfD is part of DHHS which is the major service provider - we would argue that the current arrangement has worked well for many years without compromising the fearlessness of funded organisations.
- 4.5 VALID would proudly defend its record as a frank and fearless organisation, and we believe Victoria's advocacy groups generally have a proud history of fearlessness and integrity. VALID's experience is that the Office for Disability has fully respected and supported the independent role of organisations such as our own. If there are problems in the current arrangement they are due to lack of recognition and resourcing rather than lack of integrity.
- 4.6 Notwithstanding the above comments, VALID agrees that even the perception of conflict of interest in advocacy funding should be avoided if possible. We would therefore welcome a secure, independent funding program that promotes vigorous community driven advocacy with minimal conflicts of interest. In particular, VALID supports the model proposed by Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) in a paper titled "*A Proposal for a New Administrative and Leadership Framework for Disability Advocacy*". This paper sets out an argument for the establishment of a statutory authority that could administer the funding of independent advocacy at arm's length from government departments and other disability support programs.

- 4.7 The DANA paper makes specific reference to the Scottish model for funding and administration of independent advocacy as a framework that would work well in the Australian context. While there have been some changes in the Scottish system since the DANA paper was written, the current Scottish arrangements include a peak sector based body that plays a significant role in maintaining standards through collaboration and self regulation. The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (<http://www.siaa.org.uk>) is able to meet government administration interests in accountability for public expenditure without compromising the independence of the advocacy role and community ownership and governance. Accountability to community and people with disabilities and their families is as critical, if not more critical, than the role of administrations which have an interest in avoiding systemic advocacy efforts where there has been a failure of public policy or administration.
- 4.8 VALID would like to see serious consideration given to adapting the Scottish model to the Australian context. The independent disability advocacy sector and the communities it serves should be involved in a genuine co-design and co-production process in developing a stronger and better funded network of advocacy support agencies.
- 4.9 VALID believes that a thorough review is required of all components of the advocacy system. We are reluctant to propose yet another review, given the number of reviews that have been previously ignored or dismissed, but there is a strong case to argue that the NDIS reforms will greatly increase the demand on advocacy groups and thereby reduce their capacity to deal with other core issues such as abuse and neglect. In particular, we would encourage a review of the demand for Individual Advocacy, Self Advocacy and Family Advocacy Support, and Systemic Advocacy representation.

#### **4.10 Individual Advocacy**

- Many people with a disability require support to help them deal with issues ranging from everyday dilemmas to major life-changing challenges. Many rely on the informal advocacy support of families, friends and neighbours. Many also require the independent support of a professional advocate. Whether they receive it or not, however, usually depends on either their own capacity to ask for it, or on the willingness of those around them to seek it. The capacity of most advocacy organisations to proactively seek out people in need of support is virtually non-existent.
- One of the roles advocates commonly play is to support people to negotiate their way through the maze of disability agencies and mainstream bodies. Without such support, people unfamiliar with the system (i.e. most people) can find it overwhelming, confusing and inaccessible. Often people have trouble working out where to go with an issue and find themselves being pushed back and forth between jurisdictions and agencies, which can be quite discouraging and overwhelming.

- Because of the historically limited supply, individual advocacy has tended to become focused on reacting to situations of crisis or high need, and has become less available to people who need advocacy support in their day-to-day lives. Such advocacy was once the charter of Citizen Advocacy groups, and it is very regrettable that Government support for agencies that recruit citizens from the community to stand alongside people with intellectual disability over the long term has all but disappeared. Instead, individual advocacy has mostly become, like VALID's, a form of crisis-driven, short-term support. Such advocacy is critically important, but without the long-term, low-level form of advocacy support, many issues that might have been easily resolved at an early stage tend to escalate and become major issues demanding a crisis response.
- The prevalence of abuse and neglect in services for people with a disability has been one of VALID's greatest concerns over the years, and occupies a high percentage of VALID's individual advocacy work. For instance, between 2012-2015, VALID recorded 89 cases of abuse and/or neglect. A simple extrapolation to the total client population would suggest we have barely scratched the surface. Our figures only represent those people who have sought VALID's individual advocacy support. They don't account for the many people who talk within VALID's networks about their experiences of abuse. They don't account for the numbers of people who talk to us confidentially about abuse, and who decide not to complain. They also don't account for the numbers of staff who phone us anonymously to seek advice on dealing with abusive practices within their service.
- Individual advocacy is an essential element of an effective safeguards system, yet most advocacy organisations are seriously under-resourced to respond to the intensity and complexity of issues they are presented with - especially issues of abuse and neglect. VALID, for example, is a state-wide service whose funding allows us to effectively employ less than two advocates.
- Individual advocacy services are typically:
  - Thin on the ground
  - Focused on people in crisis
  - Reactive and incapable of proactive out-reach
  - Unable to provide long term advocacy support
  - Incapable of getting to people who are isolated

#### **4.11 Self Advocacy and Family Advocacy**

- VALID has worked over the years to establish a range of *self advocacy networks* and *family advocacy networks* that provide ongoing support to people with disabilities and their families. This strategy has been based on our belief that when people with intellectual disability have a voice, are connected with their peers and have the positive support of their families, they are more likely to speak up about the issues affecting them, including abuse and neglect. Our networks include:

- Regular monthly meetings of five regional self advocacy networks (Melbourne and Geelong) and one central self advocacy group (CBD)
  - The Keys to Success Program - an ongoing program of information forums and skills building workshops for people with disabilities and family members
  - The annual Having a Say Conference involving app. 1200 people with disabilities, family members and supporters
  - The Geelong Parent Network
  - Ongoing support to numerous Client Committees within Day Services and House Meetings within accommodation services
  - Over 25 peer groups and networks for people with disabilities and family members throughout the State
- Through such networks and groups, we have sought to strengthen the capacity of often vulnerable people to build their self confidence and courage to stand up for themselves - and for each other. A key feature of the networks and groups has been the ongoing provision of information regarding rights and responsibilities, the right to be free from abuse and neglect and the right to complain.
  - In the course of both our individual and group work, VALID frequently supports people in disclosing issues of abuse. Wherever possible we provide individual advocacy support, and/or referral, as well as ongoing opportunities to participate in self-advocacy and peer-support networks that build the individual's capacity to take action. We are confident that these kinds of activities play an important role in contributing to the safeguarding of people with intellectual disability, but we are also acutely aware of the patchwork nature of our efforts, the high level of vulnerability of many people with intellectual disability, and the chronic failings of the system that is supposed to be supporting them.

#### **4.12 Systemic Advocacy**

- While individual advocacy, self advocacy and family advocacy are critically important forms of advocacy support, VALID's experience is that they are only as effective as their ability to inform and drive systemic change. In our experience, people with intellectual disability and their families have a wealth of experience to offer policy-makers and government, which generally goes ignored due to the lack of capacity within their representative bodies - including VALID - to effectively participate.
- Although VALID is not funded to undertake systemic advocacy we consider it an essential aspect of our advocacy role. Our capacity to contribute to systemic policy development, consultations and inquiries - including the current inquiry - is always constrained by the need to meet our primary individual advocacy responsibilities. For that reason, we often find it difficult to offer considered and representative responses to the many issues affecting people with intellectual disability.

- VALID believes there needs to be a comprehensive boost to the capacity of disability advocacy groups to effectively support, assist and represent Victorians with a disability through Individual Advocacy, Self Advocacy, Family Advocacy and Systemic Advocacy. We strongly echo the recommendations of the Ombudsman:

*"I make recommendations in principle in this report, bearing in mind the introduction of the NDIS. They focus on two key areas: the need for a single independent oversight body for the disability sector, and building the role of advocacy to empower the disempowered. Together, they should make a formidable difference, and should be the bedrock of any new national safeguarding system."*

## **5. Prevention, screening and accreditation**

**Should the Victorian Government develop a statewide prevention and risk management strategy for the Victorian disability workforce from 2016 to 2019?**

**If so, what specific components would comprise such a strategy?**

**In Victoria, what would be the most preferable screening system to establish?**

- **A legislated disability worker exclusion scheme?**
- **A legislated working with vulnerable persons check?**
- **A combined version of an exclusion scheme and a working with vulnerable persons check?**

**Should a disability worker registration scheme be established, similar to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)?**

- **If so, should this be a national or state agency?**

**Should an independent body be established to oversee service standards, accreditation and registration?**

- **If so, should this be a national or state agency?**

5.1 While VALID might have views and opinions about these issues, it does not have a developed position. We feel these are all critical issues that should be worked through by the Victorian Government in consultation with the key representative bodies.

## **6. Professional development**

**Should minimum qualifications be introduced for all disability workers?**

- **If so, what should be the minimum qualifications?**
- **Should this be a state or national requirement?**

**Should there be compulsory requirements for professional development for disability workers?**

## **If so, what care components of ongoing professional development would be required?**

- 6.1 The needs of people with a disability vary greatly. So do the skills required of their support workers. For instance, the skills required of someone providing personal care to a person with a physical disability are quite different to the skills required of someone supporting a person with intellectual disability to socialise or make decisions.
- 6.2 While skills may vary, there are values and principles which are common across all disabilities, and which are reflected through the UNCRPD, the NDIS Act and the Victorian Disability Act. E.g. the values of self determination, inclusion and respect, and the principles of person-centred thinking, self directed planning and empowerment. Such values and principles are responsible for shaping the culture of disability organisations. Training and orientation for support workers should, at an absolute minimum, emphasise such values and principles. Staff who do not share and commit to such values and principles have no place in the disability sector.
- 6.3 In relation to people with intellectual disability, the Developmental Principle has long been regarded as fundamental. It implies that people with intellectual disability are always capable of learning through new experiences, regardless of the severity of a person's cognitive impairment. Support workers should therefore be skilled in facilitating such opportunities. Unfortunately, it appears that staff training has been systematically eroded over time, and as a result staff have little or no training in such basic techniques as task analysis, developmental programming, positive behaviour support and social role valorisation. These methods can be powerful tools for enhancing the capacity of people with intellectual disability to participate in the community. Without skilled staff to support them to effectively access community - both physically and socially - many people with an intellectual disability will continue to be - as they are often currently being - failed.
- 6.4 The skills of workers should be defined by the tasks they are set. The NDIS sets workers such tasks as connecting people with a disability to their communities and building their capacity to exercise choice and control. The NDIS Draft Outcomes Framework establishes a comprehensive set of expectations which will only be achieved if there is a workforce ready and skilled to deliver it.
- 6.5 VALID believes there needs to be a thorough review of the training requirements of staff working with people with disability, in order to ensure people are supported to achieve the Outcomes identified by the NDIS. The more skilled the workforce, the greater the outcomes will be; without skilled workers, many people with an intellectual disability will not achieve greater independence or community participation, and their support needs will remain unnecessarily higher and therefore more expensive.

## **7. Workforce culture**

**What does the Victorian Government need to do to support a disability workforce culture that does not tolerate abuse, neglect or exploitation?**

**What do Victorian disability service providers need to do to promote and achieve a workforce culture that does not tolerate abuse, neglect or exploitation?**

7.1 VALID is aware of many factors that contribute to the prevalence of abuse in the disability sector, including:

- Abuse prevention is not led from the top down in organisations. Service provider Boards are not held sufficiently accountable for operational matters. Management are not required to provide adequate training in abuse prevention and identification to staff or have in place open and transparent processes to make complaints or report abuse. Reports of abuse are often not appropriately managed by management and staff who dare to report are often then targeted.
- Inadequacy of recruitment and induction processes. They sometimes fail to screen out people whose personal values are at odds with the principles of respect and empowerment.
- Increased auditing and risk assessment processes are taking time away from staff to work with clients and are contributing to stress and burn-out
- There is a lack of professional development opportunities for staff to step outside the daily operations to reflect on practice and talk issues through with senior staff.
- There is a severely demoralised staff culture in many organisations. Managers fail to create a supportive work environment.
- The heavy use of casual staff in some services has caused a decline in regarding disability services as a worthy vocation and career.
- The role of house supervisor - which is so important key for determining whether residents' rights are protected - is poorly supported and valued by management.
- Line management and supervision is often ineffective.
- Disability service staff, clients and families are not educated to recognise 'grooming behaviours'.
- Advocacy support is too hard to get for clients in need, especially on an ongoing basis.
- Housing incompatibility causes unnecessary tensions and conflicts amongst clients.

7.2 In relation to the final issue mentioned above, severe underfunding by governments and under investment in appropriate housing creates a context where many people with high support needs are forced to live in group accommodation with other residents who may not be compatible. In many instances, people are unable to enjoy being at home because they are in constant fear of being hurt or abused by others. This is a form of systemic abuse that would not be acceptable for any other citizen.

7.3 Many others who do not have higher support needs find themselves in boarding houses where they experience abuse, neglect and exploitation. These accommodation facilities have become dumping grounds for people with disabilities who would otherwise be homeless.

Yours sincerely



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VALID Incorporated is the recipient of the Office for Public Advocacy Disability Award 2015 and the Annecto Human Rights Award 2013