



The Honourable Warren Pitt MP
Member for Mulgrave



Queensland
Government

04 OCT 2004

Mr N Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Legislative Assembly of Queensland
Parliament House
Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE Q 4000

Minister for
Communities and
Disability Services



Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 20 August 2004, forwarding a copy of a petition tabled in the Parliament on 17 August 2004 concerning the relocation of a women's shelter from an established residential area to a more appropriate location.

The Department of Housing is responsible for the administration of the Crisis Accommodation Program which operates throughout Queensland to provide short term secure accommodation for people requiring support to move to independent accommodation. The Crisis Accommodation Program is closely linked to the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, administered by the Department of Communities. This provides recurrent funding for salaries and operating costs for the provision of support services for homeless people. The property that is the subject of the petition was purchased under the Crisis Accommodation Program to provide accommodation and support for homeless women in Mackay.

I understand that it has taken considerable time to locate a property of the size, quality and location, suitable for the operation of this service. The Department of Housing undertook a comparison of the relative merits of other properties on the market at the time of the purchase. The Department of Communities sought input from the community organisation and regional staff to identify the best solution to meet the short-term housing needs of single women and also accessible to public transport and amenities.

The local residents express concern that they were not consulted when considering the purchase. I am advised that the purchase or construction of a property, for use as a women's shelter, is exempt from the requirement for public advertisement of a material change of use under the provisions of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*, for security reasons. The Department of Housing does not therefore consult with neighbours when considering such a purchase or construction.

Since the purchase, regional officers from the department, and officers from the Department of Housing, have sought to address resident's concerns by providing detailed information on the role of both departments, the management of the support service and the nature of the client group. A meeting was arranged by the organisation at a neighbour's house for this purpose, as well as a subsequent doorknock of all neighbouring properties.

13th Floor, 111 George Street
Brisbane, Queensland 4000
PO Box 187, Brisbane Albert Street
Queensland 4002, Australia
Telephone +61 7 3235 4180
Facsimile +61 7 3230 2186
Email CanDJS@communities.qld.gov.au
Website www.communities.qld.gov.au
Website www.disability.qld.gov.au
DOC ABN 38 672 508 567
DSQ ABN 25 791 185 155

I am advised that, in constructing or purchasing properties for this purpose, the Department of Housing frequently encounters concerns such as those expressed in the letter and petition. However, due to good management by the support services and consistent maintenance programs, these expressed fears have not resulted in neighbourhood distress of the type expressed in the petition. I understand that the Department of Housing is not aware of evidence of properties being devalued in a location where a women's shelter has been placed.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "JWPitt". The letters are cursive and connected.

Warren Pitt MP
Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors