

Response to the Royal Commission from Araluen Centre April 2022

Submissions of Counsel Assisting following Public hearing 20

Preventing and responding to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation in disability services

Araluen has decided to respond to the Royal Commission as we believe that the approaches and processes we follow assist in preventing and protecting residents in Supported Independent Living from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

In responding, Araluen has provided our thoughts and approaches to those recommendations in Part 7 of the Submissions of Counsel Assisting which we believe may be of some value to Royal Commission.

In making our response, Araluen does not claim to be full proof or have all the answers to prevent violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation in our own disability services but are willing to constantly review and consider how we may continue to improve at each instance of support.

460: Resident Selection and compatibility. Initial selection of residents.

Araluen assesses compatibility by reviewing documentation and assessment of needs in addition to visiting the participant in alternative environments to understand the needs of that participant and recognise any compatibility issue that may be identified.

The house manager and program manager take an integral role in reviewing support needs and advocating the needs of the other participants who already live in the house. The compatibility assessment is designed to highlight any possible incompatibilities for discussion with all relevant people. In all situations the existing residents and their families are part of the compatibility process and we ensure privacy and confidentiality is maintained for all involved.

The compatibility assessment includes a visit to the home environment and any further observations and discussions with people or services who know the participant well enough to identify early any potential discrepancies that may impact on the compatibility of all residents.

Araluen has always and will always advocate that resident compatibility is the most important factor when filling a vacancy. It is this process which is most likely to lead to all residents living in a comfortable and safe environment, freely able to express themselves, with access to their private space and enjoying valued relationships.

541: Responses to resident-to-resident violence

All violence related incidents are reported by those staff with first-hand experience to Araluen's General Manager Quality & Service Development via an on-line Incident Reporting. This process requires an immediate response from line managers and managers depending on the severity of the incident.

Responses by line managers and program managers include

- What have you done in response to this incident?
- What do you believe the underlying cause was?
- If it has happened before, what was put in place?

- How effective has your response been?

All actions are reviewed by line managers and the quality team, and the appropriate actions are responded to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of participants, staff and the community. Additional support and advice will be engaged as required and may include medical assistance, specialist therapies, environmental reviews, counselling, staff training and strategic planning to assist in the change that maybe required.

All family or significant others are informed of the incident and their involvement and input is encouraged and valued at all times.

Incidents are governed by both the Executive Leadership Team and the Board Quality & Client Services Committee. Araluen ensures that incidents and strategies to reduce re-occurrence are reviewed by all relevant stakeholders at regular intervals to ensure a collaborative approach to identifying triggers or circumstances that would have contributed to the incident which will assist in a reduction or amelioration of the behaviours.

Incident reports are also available for the Community Visitors to view and we encourage this.

564: Failures in communication with families about resident-to-resident violence

All incidents involving participants are communicated to families and or significant others, in incident reports. Where resident-to-resident violence has occurred, both families will be contacted and consulted to ensure open and transparent communication with a clear view on how this issue will best be addressed. Araluen ensures that this communication is provided by the House Manager and Program Manager so as to ensure accountable, accurate, timely information, and actions to be taken are clear and have the highest priority, the safety and well-being of the participants.

566: Inadequate staffing levels

Staffing levels in a Supported Independent Living (SIL) environment are the responsibility of the provider. Araluen use the approved SIL's to design a Roster of Care (ROC) addressing the needs of both individual and shared supports.

When Araluen design a ROC, we ensure all stakeholders are consulted, to ensure appropriate support levels are identified and documented and the evidence is provided to support each resident's needs. NDIS is clear that the nominated or authorised person, (usually family) have had the SIL explained to them, they understand the nature of the supports that will be provided and consent that the SIL be submitted to NDIS.

Araluen's process once the SIL and ROC have been approved is to design a staffing roster that will best meet all participants needs in a shared environment. All rosters are managed flexibly and responsively to ensure the changing needs of participants. This is reliant on Araluen's expertise with managing the changing support needs of residents on an ongoing basis and at all times consider how we can be responsive to the changing supports for people. It is important and comforting for families to understand that Araluen has the flexibility to adapt and change the supports particularly in challenging times. Whilst it is important for families to be part of the process and show their support it is not their role to secure the additional funding that is required.

Araluen as the SIL provider is responsible to act on behalf of the participant to secure additional funding requesting a change of circumstance and providing evidence to support

the request. There are many situations where Araluen has been flexible with the existing SIL funding to accommodate and fund immediate changing support needs, despite long delays and at times opaque processes in place with NDIS.

571: High turnover of staff

Araluen actively recruits for staff at a minimum of three times a year, more often if it is an identified need, we maintain our own casual pool of staff who are orientated and inducted into the culture and values of Araluen, we have mandatory training requirements for all of the organisation and in addition specific participant related training for all staff including casuals. There are times when agency staff are required but that is kept to a minimum to reduce the lack of experience and consistency for the supports of participants. Middle management and senior management are very stable with an extremely low turnover rate. When leave is taken, a staff member will act up in the role to ensure consistency and changes in staffing are communicated to participants and families as a matter of priority and courtesy.

590: Lack of leadership, support, and training from management

The executive and middle management of Araluen are consistently in attendance at all residences, making themselves seen and available to participants and staff.

The operations of our residences are a standing agenda item at the Executive Leadership Team and participants, their family and supporters have direct phone access to executive and middle management.

All staff have access to the on-line My Support Plan (MSP) which provides detailed documentation about the support needs of each resident. The MSP is updated as required or at minimum per annum. The MSP also includes all assessment, strategies, documents, or instructions for support. Staff are aware of this and are required to report on every shift about how the residents' needs were supported or details of their day. Any specific behaviour support plans are reinforced with staff training, mentoring, documentation, role modelling and evaluation.

Our Orientation and Induction process is a significant contribution to setting the values and expectations of our new staff and is constantly reviewed to ensure it is providing the intended support.

All staff are paid and supported to attend training.

637: Residential statements and service agreements

Under the Disability Act 2006 it is a requirement that all residents have a yearly Residential Statement explaining what the service would provide and any costs associated with those services. It also identifies communication channels and how to report any grievance to Araluen. The statements are updated and renewed every 12months by Araluen.

643: Concerns about the way LWB spent and accounted for residents' money

All resident finances are managed through the Araluen finance department. Any resident funds that are required for general expenditure or day-to-day spending are documented by the house team leader, tracking all credits and debits for each participant. Those funds are reconciled every month and families are invited to view or receive a copy of those transactions

at their request. Any queries or transactions that are identified as inappropriate are investigated and acted on.

659: NDIS planning, SIL quoting and review process

It is Araluen's strong belief that at all stages of NDIS SIL and ROC processes, families and significant others should be included in the planning. Araluen ensures that families are aware of the process and are able to contribute in a meaningful way to their family members NDIS planning meeting. It is an expectation that a manager at minimum is available to assist a resident at a planning meeting. Araluen does this to ensure that the required SIL and ROC can be explained to the planner so they have a comprehensive understanding of what is required to receive the appropriate supports to ensure their health, safety, and wellbeing.

Araluen believe strongly that the ROC is a very good tool which identifies the hourly supports for each resident both individually and in a shared environment and if approved provides an excellent basis on which to roster appropriate supports.

Until recently this was the basis that underpinned the appropriate supports for residents living in SIL homes. NDIS have changed the way the SIL and ROC tool is approved, seemingly defaulting residents to unclear standards when undeniable evidence exists that a resident's needs are complex and unique and not provided by opaque and inadequate standard assessments. The communication of these assessments and reductions in support is not detailed or justified and in most cases queries go unanswered.

Araluen is now spending a large part of their time preparing multiple reports and attempting to access further assessments to have NDIS plans reviewed without a clear understanding of the NDIS reassessment.

Penny Kendall

General Manager – Options for Community Living

Araluen

Tamara Cattach

Chief Executive

Araluen

8th April 2022