To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in representation of Carinya Lodge, 89 Fairview St Arncliffe. On behalf of this boarding house I wish to argue my point of view, to sections of the proposed Draft Boarding House Regulations Act 2013.

In particular the section below:

The maximum number of residents that may occupy the same bedroom in an authorised boarding house is:

(a) the maximum number specified in a condition of the boarding house authorisation imposed (or taken to have been imposed) by the Director-General, or

(b) if no maximum number is specified by such a condition:
(i) in the case where the residents know each other and have requested a shared bedroom—2 residents, or
(ii) in any other case—one resident.

I understand that this is a draft regulation, and as such want to make it official that I strongly disagree with this section and the proposal to install single occupancy rooms immediately or even in 5 years’ time. There are many problems and issues I see in this section of the draft and certainly other ways of meeting the objectives of giving residents’ privacy and security.

Basically, I argue that the current dual occupancy arrangement in this boarding house, is meeting all our residents’ needs and privacy. Living in dual occupancies has many benefits, that far outweigh any that single occupancy may offer.

Dual occupancy in bedrooms has been operational within this boarding house for 20+ years now. Some residents have experienced and enjoyed this way of living for the whole 15 years with many living in this environment for 10+ years. Unfortunately some residents have very little contact with family and/or friends and the boarding house “life”, is their family. So too are the friendships they develop living with the other residents and the greater friendships/companionships and sense of belonging they experience living together in a room with someone else. These experiences would never occur while living alone. Suddenly placing these residents in a room by
themselves would very likely be unproductive with residents' wellbeing and potentially dangerous and in some cases unsafe.

My Manager constantly has meetings with residents to talk about any issues within the boarding house, and the topic of sharing a room with their friend has never been an issue. In fact, we did have a case where one resident thought he wanted his own room and we offered this to him and set him up as such. After experiencing living alone he changed his mind and decided he would prefer to share. This scenario, I believe would be the same with all our residents.

Sharing a room with another person helps individuals “break the ice” with other residents and also helps them to feel comfortable and sets them up in “fitting into” the routine of the house. Residents are always put into a room with someone of same sex, age, and who we think would be good for each other. Accommodation arrangements are not decided lightly and such decisions are always done in full consultation with the Manager and residents concerned.

Sharing a room with someone actually increases the safety of a resident in relation to health/personal/psychological issues, as there is always a person close to hand to help watch out for them. There are many residents in our boarding house who would actually be devastated to be put into a room by themselves, especially those who have been sharing for many years.

We have found that residents when sharing a room encourage each other to try the many activities that are offered and provided by Aftercare and other community organisations. Activities within the community such as shopping, going for coffee or lunch, bingo, dancing etc. These are all better utilised as residents live, try and encourage together.

Previously we only had a few residents that were working for themselves, however, those sharing a room have encouraged their roommates to give it a try and many of them are now enjoying the independence of working. Working has been fantastic for their wellbeing, they are confident and happy and they are now much better placed in society. Many would never have tried working if they weren’t sharing with another resident.

I understand privacy is a concern in relation to this draft regulation, and it should be highlighted that most residents are showered and dressed separately in our bathrooms, by Home care and/or other groups. All showers and toilets have locks. Residents all have lockable cupboards and draws for their belongings. Any pictures or personal items (furniture that they have) is accommodated into their room. Residents often get to have time alone in their room, residents use the recreational areas within the boarding house at various/different times and on occasion attend activities sometimes without their roommate. Every room at our boarding house is in full compliance with the 1973 Act and easily accommodate two people comfortably.

This boarding house has a private meeting room to assist with any private issues/meetings that a resident may require. This room is encouraged to be used, but in all honesty, is really used, only on the odd occasion. Our Manager as part of her
operational technique, makes sure residents have time alone in their room if they want it, but we have found that because the residents use the recreational areas of the boarding house, time alone in their room is not usually wanted. At the same time, dual occupancy teaches residents to respect each other’s time, space and place in the home.

This boarding house has complied with DADHC, now ADHC, in all regulations, audits, instructions and directions over the years, and has developed a very good, open and viable working relationship. If this draft was accepted, the current relationship, would from my perspective, be completely betrayed. The relationship would become very strained and hostile and I could not see it being “repaired”.

In relation to making all rooms single occupancy can I ask the following question…. If you were to “theoretically” halve the number of residents in this boarding house, as well as the other 60+ (currently licensed boarding houses) in NSW that would mean finding 60 x 10, 600 places for current residents. This does not even include the 200+ unlicensed houses in the state. Where are 600+ people going to be housed and who is going to look after these residents?

Can I assume every nursing home in NSW will be regulated with the same process of accommodating all residents to a single room? If not, where is the difference, why do people in our boarding house need more privacy than someone in a nursing home?

Reducing numbers in boarding houses to one resident per room would also mean the loss of income for owners. Many would not be able to afford the mortgage on their boarding house, nor would they be able to afford upkeep on the property. They would not be able to afford good staff which would certainly affect resident’s wellbeing. Licensed Managers are very much an important part of the resident’s life. Heating and food quality would all be affected. In essence Boarding houses would not survive.

Very few residents that come to our boarding house leave. They love it here and have made this their home. They would be devastated if they had to be evicted or moved and this draft regulation in forcing this move, would devastate these residents and I believe would be extremely detrimental to their well-being, maybe even fatal.

Other concerns I have with sections of this draft/ discussions and previous correspondence are:

- A standard Occupant Agreement…who writes this up, who suggests the responsibilities of residents and manager’s rights? The eviction process, this needs explanation?
- Has there been a decision of a bond, between residents and boarding houses?
- Discussions with all stakeholders…can I get minutes of such meetings, also on meetings previously held last year between ADHC and boarding houses?

Again I completely argue against aspects of this draft, especially in relation to the single room occupancy proposal. Carinya Lodge, Arncliffe wishes to operate and
continue under the existing regulation without any restrictions as to whether rooms can be single, double or other.

I openly welcome any Government or Association employee wishing to visit a boarding house, to meet with me on site at Carinya Arncliffe. This opportunity would give a complete understanding of my points and better qualify someone in making a final decision.

Yours Sincerely,

Craig Baker