



ANDREW CONSTANCE MP
Minister for Ageing
Minister for Disability Services

ANTHONY ROBERTS MP
Minister for Fair Trading

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW GOVERNMENT TO DELIVER IMPROVED PROTECTIONS FOR BOARDING HOUSE RESIDENTS

The NSW Government has today announced reforms to the Boarding House sector that will deliver greater protections to some of the state's most vulnerable residents.

Minister for Disability Services, Andrew Constance, said the reforms will be included in a Draft Exposure Bill that will be provided to key stakeholders for feedback, before legislation is introduced to Parliament later this year.

"Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) has an obligation under the *Youth and Community Services Act 1973*, to license and regulate boarding houses that accommodate people with a disability," Mr Constance said.

"However, this legislation is fundamentally flawed because the regulatory powers are unclear, the penalties for non-compliance are totally inadequate and it doesn't provide clear rights for the residents."

"The NSW Liberals & Nationals are determined to put the appropriate legislation in place to protect and uphold the rights of vulnerable residents, whether they are people with a disability, students, or those on low incomes."

Proposed changes include:

- The introduction of a registration system for NSW boarding houses
- Occupancy rights for residents
- Standards for boarding houses
- Increased penalties for non-compliance with the regulations
- Increased powers of entry

Under the current laws, unscrupulous operators face fines of up to \$500, which provide insufficient disincentives for operators who mistreat or neglect vulnerable residents.

"These penalties will dramatically increase with fines of \$11,000 for individual operators or \$22,000 for corporations if they breach the regulations," Mr Constance said.

Minister for Fair Trading Anthony Roberts said a registration system will be put in place and a website developed containing information on occupancy rights and standards for operators.

“There are currently no occupancy rights for residents living in boarding houses, such as the right to live in clean premises and be given notice of eviction, nor are there clear responsibilities for operators or residents on how the property should be maintained,” Mr Roberts said.

“Our reforms will address these areas. The introduction of a registration system for NSW boarding houses will ensure vulnerable people are no longer living in unlicensed facilities where they have no rights. ”

Mr Constance said the NSW Liberals & Nationals are committed to delivering on Boarding House reforms, unlike the former Labor government which received a series of scathing reports from the Ombudsman.

“There have been calls for an overhaul of how boarding houses are regulated for a decade and the failure to act by the former Labor government is another example of their incompetence during 16 years in office.”

Key stakeholders will be consulted on the proposed changes to the legislation before it goes to Parliament later this year.

“I am determined to continue our efforts in identifying ways to improve the conditions that vulnerable people in NSW are living in, as well as enhance the viability of the boarding house sector,” Mr Constance said.

“Protecting the rights of vulnerable people, including people with a disability, is a priority of the O’Farrell Government.”

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