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Improving conditions in boarding houses

The NSW Ombudsman Bruce Barbour tabled a special report to Parliament this morning titled *More than board and lodging: the need for boarding house reform*.

The report draws on extensive work by the Ombudsman since 2002, which has identified serious concerns about the safety, health, welfare and rights of the residents of licensed boarding houses, and the adequacy of the system that is meant to protect them.

'For the past nine years, my office has highlighted the vulnerability and poor circumstances of people living in licensed boarding houses, many of whom have a disability and require daily supervision and support,' said Mr Barbour.

'My work has found that boarding house accommodation does not afford residents adequate protection, support or rights, and there is a pressing need for significant reform to address this longstanding and unacceptable situation.'

The Ombudsman reports that:

- His work clearly illustrates the significant and ongoing issues experienced by people living in licensed boarding houses, including human rights violations and inadequate support and protections to safeguard their safety, health and welfare.
- He has repeatedly found critical failings on the part of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) to fulfil its responsibilities to monitor and enforce standards in licensed boarding houses.
- The current legislation and standards relating to licensed boarding houses are inadequate to protect residents from harm and violations of their fundamental human rights.

'At a minimum, action must be taken to address the existing problems with the legislation governing licensed boarding houses and to improve the circumstances of their residents,' Mr Barbour said. **'However, there are compelling reasons to undertake broader reform of the boarding house sector to bring better protections and regulation.'**

In June, an Interdepartmental Committee, chaired by ADHC, submitted a report to government on options for reforming the boarding house sector. The Premier has since announced a parliamentary committee inquiry on related issues.

'I welcome the move towards boarding house reform,' said Mr Barbour. **'However, the progress of work in this area has been too slow. The need for concerted and sustained cross-government action to achieve real and improved outcomes for people living in licensed and unlicensed boarding houses is long overdue.'**