

Below is an excerpt from the letter Shane wrote requesting an accommodation subsidy which has since been rejected. He now must appeal the decision to stay in his home.

May 7, 2008

Dear [REDACTED],

I am writing to you seeking your urgent support and assistance.

I am in my mid 40s and have *Neurofibromatosis 2*. As a result of this condition, I am now profoundly deaf and have limited vision as well as very poor balance. I rely on my walker and wheelchair to get around. My primary communication is Auslan (Australian Sign Language). My case manager at Able Australia is helping me to write this letter.

For six years I was living independently in a rented unit with some support from Able Australia. Able Australia is the only organisation that understands my situation due to their expertise in dual sensory loss (vision and hearing loss). However now my health has deteriorated to the point where I am not able to live independently and I now require personal assistance showering, dressing and cutting up food.

I found a new home where I stayed for three months but it was a disaster as not one resident could communicate with me. Not one of the residents was my age.

I was then placed into other accommodation with a mixture of elderly and other adults with disabilities. During my nine month stay there my mental health suffered greatly as I felt extremely isolated and depressed. Again, none of the residents were able to communicate with me. I was frequently left to sit alone in my room. It was the most depressing experience in my life and for the first time in my life, I had to rely on medication to calm my anxieties and frustrations as well as anger.

My case manager from Able Australia has contacted all possible avenues but was unable to find suitable accommodation for me. Then finally in April 2008, a bed was found for me in Eltham, but only for a period of six weeks. It was a short term agreement after much lobbying from my Able Australia case manager on my behalf. I have now been a resident there for two weeks. I am feeling very positive about living there as both staff and residents are eager to communicate with me as well as involving me in their activities.

It is a nice feeling to be accepted as part of a small community. For the first time in a long time, I feel the staff are seeing me beyond my disability and respect me as a person. It is extremely important for me to develop friendships as I do not have any other friends and contact with family is limited to occasional visits by my nephew.

We recently had a deafblind awareness training session for the staff and residents. They were enthusiastic to learn about me and they are very keen in learning more sign language to communicate with me. The staff here are very positive and warm which I appreciate. One full time staff member already knows the fingerspelling and sufficient signs to be able to communicate with me effectively.

The biggest hurdle is that after June 3, 2008, I need an additional \$220 per week. I do not have the financial resources to pay for this higher fee due to my pension rate. I urgently need support to allow me to live in an environment where I feel like I belong and can communicate with others.

Please keep in mind that I only receive four hours a week of support from Able Australia. My support worker is fluent in Auslan and supports me with my community activities such as keeping me updated with news, hydrotherapy and general personal appointments. I am unable to read books or newspapers or watch TV, listen to the radio or converse with other people due to my deafness and limited vision.

I sincerely hope you understand my unique and urgent situation and that you are able to support me.

Regards



Shane [REDACTED]