

# CONNECTED CONVERSATIONS

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IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE FROM THE  
HOUSING CONNECTION COMMUNITY



APRIL 2011

*Opportunity is often missed because we are broadcasting when we should be tuning in.*

**Anonymous**

**Thank You**

*Thank you to all the people who gave their time so freely to share their feelings about the role The Housing Connection has played in their lives. Thank you for the frank messages about what the organisation should hold onto for the future.*

*Marika Kontellis*

*Zakumi Consulting 2011*

## ***Summary***

The Housing Connection has built and enabled a community of people to choose and build a valued role in their chosen community.

The organisation's history is not unlike many other community based organisations established to meet the varying needs of people with disability and their families. Like many of these disability organisations, The Housing Connection was established, grown and developed through the leadership, passion and commitment of parents and families wanting something better for their family member with a disability.

Today, the organisation has a positive reputation and an important role in a complex and changing service delivery system. *Connected Voices* is an account of what people who are using the services think about the organisation and its future.

The general messages from those who gave their views centred around 3 key themes:

1. Creating opportunities for friendships
  
2. Nurturing the already established, and highly valued access to the organization, through its staff and Board and maintaining the level of familiarity and sense of community
  
3. Developing new services in line with needs of people in particular;
  - information and referral services for new comers to the organisation,
  - support for those people who are ageing, including retirement support, future planning and housing
  - social interaction opportunities for those people who are lonely and isolated
  - vocation support including job experience and job finding support

In short, those people who shared their views have a very high opinion of The Housing Connection and an equally high expectation of the role the organisation should play in meeting their changing needs into the future.

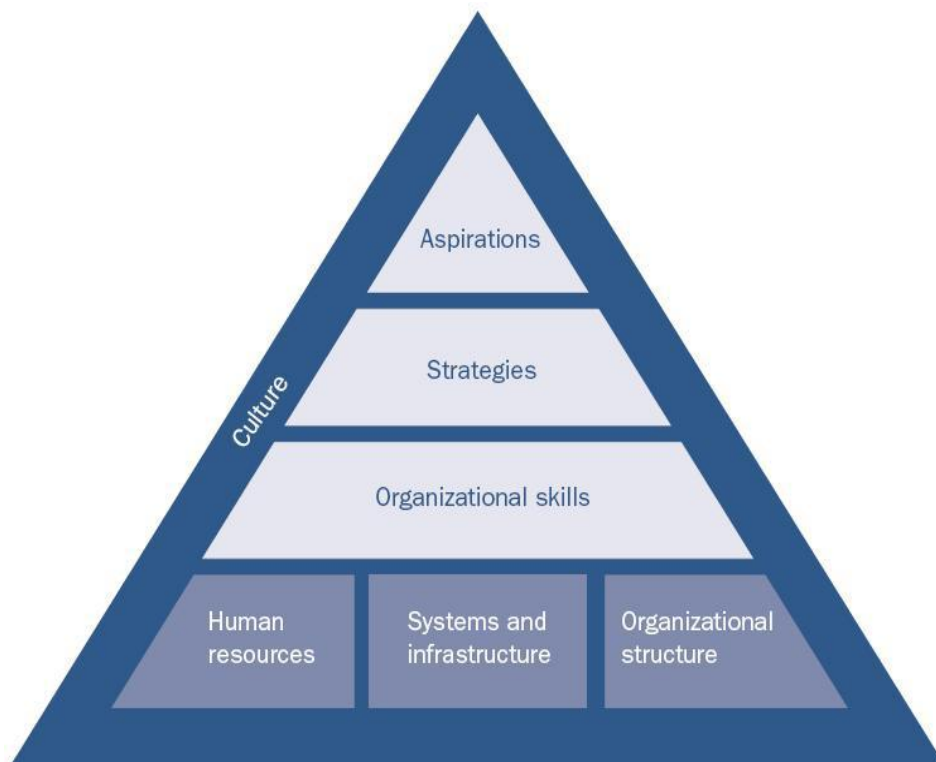
## ***About the Project***

The Board of Management at the Housing Connection has embarked upon an internal review process to determine the future direction of the organisation.

This consultation and engagement component of the Project sits within an overall systems review undertaken by Matrix On Board. This component focused on the views, needs and opinions of people who use the services of the Housing Connection.

In order to understand the capabilities of organizations Matrix On Board chooses to use “The McKinsey Capacity Assessment Grid which was created by McKinsey & Company and published in *Effective Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations (2001)*, produced for Venture Philanthropy Partners.

### **Organisational Capacity Pyramid**



## **Element Description**

### **Aspirations**

An organisation's mission, vision, and overarching goals, which collectively articulate its common sense of purpose and direction

### **Strategies**

The coherent set of actions and programs aimed at fulfilling the organisation's overarching goals

### **Organisational Skills**

The sum of the organisation's capabilities, including performance measurement, planning, resource management, and external relationship building

### **Human Resources**

The collective capabilities, experiences, potential and commitment of the organizations board, Management team, staff, and volunteers

### **Systems and Infrastructure**

The organisation's planning, decision making, knowledge management, and administrative systems, as well as its physical and technological assets

### **Organisational Structure**

The combination of governance, organizational design, interfunctional coordination, and individual job descriptions that shapes the organisation's legal and management structure

### **Culture**

The connective tissue that binds together the organisation, including shared values and practices, behavior norms, and the organisation's orientation towards performance

*Using the The McKinsey Capacity Assessment Grid as a framework, Zakumi Consulting tailored the consultation methodologies to get people's opinions about;*

1. How true The Housing Connection is to its vision and purpose
2. What people value most about The Housing Connection and its programs
3. How The Housing Connection services and support has impacted on their lives
4. The organisation's culture
5. The way the organisation does things

## ***Engagement and Consultation***

Deciding on a consultation methodology for a particular issue, in a particular context is not always easy. Zakumi Consulting believes that tailor making consultation approaches that best fit the organization, its culture and the needs of the people they service is fundamental to delivering outcomes. In this instance, the Board of Management wanted to create opportunities for people who use the services and support to have meaningful input into the future of the organisation.

Zakumi Consulting believes that consultation and engagement methodologies should possess some or all of the following characteristics:

- Based on a coherent set of design principles, concepts and theories
- Supported by a body of research undertaken either in an academic or commercial environment
- Enable a particular challenge to be tackled in a structured and systematic fashion with a high probability of achieving particular beneficial outcomes
- Likely to have been used in similar situations a number of times before and through use and application the methodology is likely to have been refined and improved

Engaging people is often the most significant challenge in consulting with them. This Project recognized that engagement is not always easy and developed a pathway using the established networks within the Housing Connections community.

The Community Conversation methodology developed by Paul Born, (Tamarack Institute in Canada) focuses on four building blocks including conversing, engaging, collaborating and casting a vision. The leaders of research or inquiry have a range of techniques to choose from to assist in answering the questions that are of most importance at a particular time.



Cartoon Source: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>

## ***How People Participated***

A total of 29 people participated in 3 separate *conversations* throughout the month of March 2011.

The Project was advertised across the organization and people were specifically invited to participate.

The first Community Conversation was part of a planned outing to the Sydney Fish Markets on a Saturday. People met in the park and a series of conversations were had with 16 people.

The second session was held on a Thursday evening with 4 young men and their families at The Housing Connection over pizza and drinks. A total of 9 people participated.

The third session was a conversation with family/carers at the Housing Connection on a weekday evening. A total of 4 people participated.

A series of key questions were asked to engage participants in conversation.

- How did you first come to know about The Housing connection
- What brought you to the Housing Connection? Your personal story
- What does the Housing Connection feel like?
- What do you value most about the Housing Connection?
- How has the Housing Connection services and support impacted on your life?
- What do you hope for in the future?
- What should The Housing Connection focus on into the future?

***Further questions during the sessions included***

- How long has The Housing Connection been part of your life?
- What do you like most about the Housing Connection?
- Why did you choose the Housing Connection as your service?
- How does the Housing Connection make your life better?
- How does the Housing Connection involve you in the organisation
- What should the Housing Connection do more/less of?
- What must the Housing Connection never lose?
- What would you say to other people who want to use The Housing Connection?

***Outcomes***

## Fish Market Picnic Conversation

- ***How did you first come to know about The Housing connection***
- ***What brought you to the Housing Connection? Your personal story.***

There was a mix of responses but the majority of people who participated in this conversation have been long time “members” of the Housing Connection community. Many of the people spoke about their personal story which brought them to The Housing Connection. Many people had lived in institutional care or with aging parents. When the policy shift to community care began to translate into services, people were introduced to The Housing Connection. In almost all instances this introduction happened because of geography.

Three of the participants were younger people recently introduced to The Housing Connection. Their story was more about requiring assistance to live in their chosen community. All three spoke about coming to The Housing connection to make friends, get help to get a job and to live independently.

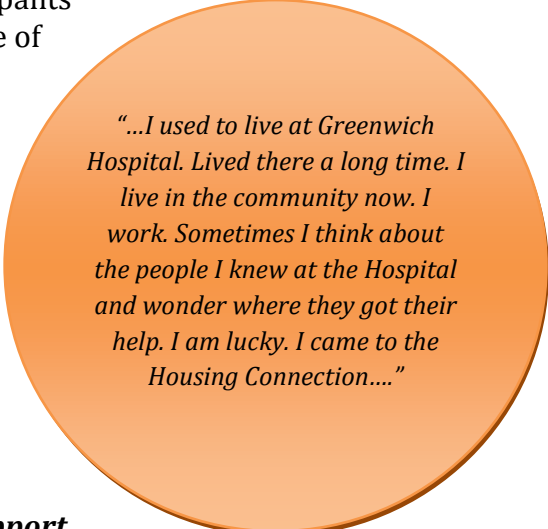
- ***What does the Housing Connection feel like?***

This question aimed to get an understanding of how participants viewed the culture of the organisation. There is a high sense of belonging and participants used the following words to describe what the organization feels like:

- Safe
- Family
- Fun
- Good

- ***What do you value most about the Housing Connection?***
- ***How has the Housing Connection services and support impacted on your life?***

The intent of this question was to identify the benefit people perceive they receive by being part of the Housing connection. Initially the responses shared were about their overwhelmingly high level of satisfaction with the team at The Housing Connection and the support they provide.



*“...I used to live at Greenwich Hospital. Lived there a long time. I live in the community now. I work. Sometimes I think about the people I knew at the Hospital and wonder where they got their help. I am lucky. I came to the Housing Connection....”*

*“THC is the best ever organisation....make sure you write that down...”*

*“Everyone is great here...they care...”*

*“..I always come to the staff when I have a problem...”*

The overwhelming message from the comments made by participants is that everyone knows everyone’s name. Participants spoke specifically about the staff and the personal relationships they have with the THC team and other people who use their services...”

People also talked about “trust”.

*“..I trust “Ann Louise...” “I can trust The Housing Connection...”*

When asked to explain what trust meant, one participant began to give an example about when not to trust others. She re-lived her personal story of mistrust of another service and how that impacted on her life. She concluded by saying

*“...When you have a disability and know it, you need to be able to get help from people you really trust...people who will not take advantage of you...”*

In terms of measuring impact on their lives many people spoke about opportunity.

*“..I don’t know what I would have done if I did not have The Housing Connection...”*

*“...I would have no friends if I did not have The Housing Connection...”*

*“...I am living in my own flat because of the Housing Connection...”*

*“... I got sick and The Housing Connection team helped me through my sickness...”*

*“...I reached my goal and went to NASA...I always wanted to do that...now I have another goal to go on a cruise...to save money and go on a cruise....that’s what I get help to do...”*

- ***What should The Housing Connection focus on into the future?***
- Initially this question produced a range of responses, driven by individual preferences like “more outings”, “a TV and games room” “different food at BBQ’s” etc.

*“..I am getting older and I want to think about where I am going to live in the future...that’s what I want help with...”*

When the question was asked differently *“What must the Housing Connection never lose?”* and *“What would you say to other people who want to use The Housing Connection?”* the responses were rich and driven by what people thought others would gain from the organization . The alignment with the values and purpose of the organisations was apparent when people spoke about

*“Making sure everyone gets the special support they need”*

*“Don’t get too big so we don’t know everyone’s names”*

*“Maybe make a Housing Connection in other parts of Australia”*

*“Take care of everybody when they get older”*

*“We need more houses and flats that are nice but don’t cost too much. The Housing Connection should have more houses”*

## Analysis and Key Messages

Element	Key Messages
<b>Aspirations</b>	Although a relatively young organisation there is a strong legacy. The organisation is values driven and the focus on individual care is shared by people who use the service. One size does not fit all and people like and value the individual attention they receive from THC. They like the fact that they know the staff and they know each other and more importantly that they are known. This was further enhanced when people focused on how support to be independent, to live in the community looked like for them.
<b>Strategies</b>	In most instances people spoke about their own support. Who comes to their home to help. The types of outings and activities they can attend, the information and referral support they receive. A focus on ageing and more affordable housing options was a key theme, as well as more planned and organised activities
<b>Organisational Skills</b>	The overwhelming evidence is that there is a high level of satisfaction amongst people who use the services. There was some evidence that people could see how the Housing Connection works with other services (e.g., employments health services) to help meet their individual needs.
<b>Human Resources</b>	The high satisfaction is directly related to the relationships staff have built with the people who use the support. The evidence is that everyone knows each other. People know who is on the Board, who is on staff and in many instances who use the services.
<b>Systems and Infrastructure</b>	Most specifically the way the organisation involves people in decisions is important to people. For example, people knew about this Project and the consultant's role when the session began. There was clear evidence that the involvement of people in decisions is visible and highly valued.
<b>Organisational Structure</b>	Although there is general acceptance of the structure the evidence is that there is, like with most organisations power imbalances. For example current Board members and ex Board members were seen as "experts" in the conversation and questions were passed to them. The "power" paid staff have in the group dynamic is evident. For example Ann Louise's and Renee's attendance in the park was received with much excitement in comparison with others who joined the group throughout the morning. Although unwanted, the assumed leaders of the group are the paid staff. Similarly there was evidence that those with a long history in the organisation belong "more" to the organisation than those who are new. The inter- generational issues were evident as well. With older people tending to want more group based activities and have a high level of dependence on THC and younger people less eager to join group based activities. This and will likely pose challenges for the future. Maintaining the same sense of belonging and ownership to the organisation may not be so easily achieved with new people.
<b>Culture</b>	The organisational values were evident through this interaction. Values like community participation, inclusion, rights of every individual to live a fulfilling life Respect Right to a service that meets individual needs, goals and aspirations came through in conversation. When people were asked to describe what the Housing Connection felt like they used words like safe, family, fun, good. What was overwhelmingly obvious was the fact that people values relationships. They felt like they belong. They know everyone and everyone knows them.

## Young Men and Their Families: Pizza and Conversation

- *How did you first come to know about The Housing connection*
- *What brought you to the Housing Connection? Your personal story*

Many of the participants in this conversation had only recently (last 6 months or so) engaged with the Housing Connection. All participants were not aware of The Housing Connection until their sons were ready to transition from school to a work or further study option. All participants were referred to the Housing Connection from the same service provider

All participants had very little involvement with the formal service system prior to being referred to The Housing Connection. Most people knew little about what is available or even how services can be accessed. For these young men and their families the focus was on what next after school.

When challenged in conversation with “Why is this a bigger concern for you than any other parent whose son leaves school?” the responses were surprising.

*“I suppose it is not any different”*

*“It is not different, but the challenges are different”*

*“He is okay. He looks okay, but it he is not okay”*

*“In my culture the emphasis on going to university is very strong...you have to get an education. I want my son to get an education. I want him to go to university, but he does need help and support because he does have different needs...”*


*“It is hard for me to get along with people”*

*“I do want to work...but I cannot get a job. I come here to get help to get a job...”*

Parents explained that they made their decision to accept a “placement” at THC based on the referral from the school counselor and the fact that they met The Housing Connection staff at an expo or meeting prior to making the choice.

*“Lawrence gave me confidence. I felt we could trust him”*

*“He explained to me what was offered and I knew he was experienced...”*



*“...We never used services. We do not know what is around. We do not even know what services we need to help us...”.*

They explained that getting good, honest and experienced advice is critical. They feel that often they are unsure what they need or want. One person explained that she would not call accessing The Housing Connection a “choice”. “We were referred and we accepted the offer of support...”

***What do you value most about the Housing Connection? What do you like most about the Housing Connection? How does the Housing Connection make your life better?***

Parents felt they were unable to answer these questions fully because their relationship with THC was relatively new. They were able to confirm that their sons were happy and engaged with the Program but were unsure what they actually do during the day. Parents shared that they did have expectations that their sons would be involved in more group based activities and through that build friendships. They were concerned that individual based support limited their opportunities to make friendships. This was a consistent message from parents across all questions.

The young men were able to clearly say that they felt “comfortable” when they come in at THC and feeling comfortable and “*at home*” was important.

*“I come in every week. Once a week and we do things to help me get a job. I spend time with Sacha or Lawrence and we work on my skills”*

*“We look for and apply for courses and work..”*

Goal setting was also important.

*“..I get help to set goals and that is important. Setting goals and ideas on how to reach my goals...”*

*“..Knowing that I can come here if I need help is important...”*

*“...The most important thing for me is to get a job. I want a job in IT..”*

***What should the Housing Connection do more/less of? What must the Housing Connection never lose? What would you say to other people who want to use The Housing Connection?***

A very clear theme of more opportunities to build friendships and social skills through supported activities emerged throughout the conversation. For all participants (young men and their families) the opportunity to go out, meet new people, have fun was a very real need. Parents were much more aware of this need and explained that they were disappointed that THC did not have opportunities for young people together. They also placed high value on opportunities for them, as parents to meet and build friendships through their shared experiences.

*"..This is the first time our sons have met...they have so much in common and so do we...we should continue getting together and assist them to build friendships...."*

Another key message was the need for information, and feedback. Although the young people acknowledged that more information *"about things to help me"* was important, parents were overwhelmingly interested in information about what to do, where to go, what to plan for.

*"..It would be good if there was a Newsletter. Something that had information about services and support..."*

*"..More meetings and get together like this would be fabulous. We need help to get us organised and to meet".*

For most participants the fact that the service felt *"safe"* was *"easy to get to"* and *"had good experienced"* staff was a positive thing.

## *Analysis and Key Messages*

<b>Element</b>	<b>Key Messages</b>
<b>Aspirations</b>	The focus on individual care and support was evident, but for most participants the opportunity to build friendships with peers within the organisation with this particular program is limited. The philosophy of the organisation focused on creating opportunities to ensure people have valued roles was purpose of supporting people to organisations
<b>Strategies</b>	With limited experience of the service, people spoke of their expectations not being met at this stage. They expected more of a group based program, more opportunities to meet other people, share experiences and build friendships. Information and referral was also a need not being met. The name of the organization was also raised as being inappropriate given that the service people were accessing was work support, rather than housing
<b>Organisational Skills</b>	For this group a gap exists between what the organization may potentially offer them and what it currently does. There was a low awareness of what opportunities exist within the organization and how THC works to refer on to other community services and support.
<b>Human Resources</b>	Focus on relationships with staff was evident. The people who make up the organization are important and there was a high level of trust evident.
<b>Systems and Infrastructure</b>	The importance of referral networks highlighted with this conversation. Ho referrers see the Housing Connection will impact on who is referred at a time where there are multiple providers of the same service in regions.
<b>Organisational Structure</b>	This group, particularly the parents feel isolated from the organisation and do not have the same sense of ownership or belonging as other groups who participated in the Project. The need to feel like you belong was rated as important and opportunities to be involved in information sharing, and decision making beyond individual service level was important to participants
<b>Culture</b>	This group of people are relatively new members of THC community. They were able to explain that what is important for them was the feeling of trust and safety in entering the organization. The trust was about having a relationship with the staff. Knowing their name and trusting their experience.

## Parent /Carer Conversation

- ***How did you first come to know about The Housing connection***
- ***What brought you to the Housing Connection? Your personal story.***

*"..Always concerned with organisations talk about the future. It's as if all the good things of the past have to be defended..."*

The personal stories shared by people are significant and initially revolved around the impact disability has had on them as a family, followed by how opportunities for relationships presented themselves over time.

*"..We are so lucky to have her in our lives.."*

*"...It has been so difficult and at one time I was at breaking point, but we have made so many friendships and learned so much.."*

For newer people to the Housing Connection there seems to have been very little opportunity to meet other families to share joys and challenges.

*"...I have not been to a meeting...do not really get to meet anyone..I would like to meet other families.."*

*"...We always knew something was different about her but were very confronted when we got the diagnosis "the label" when she was 32 years old..." It was a relief but also very confronting. She took it better than us..."*

***What do you value most about the Housing Connection? What do you like most about the Housing Connection? How does the Housing Connection make your life better?***

There is a high level of trust that has been established between The Housing Connection and staff and this trust is directly attributable to the relationships individual staff have built over time.

The fact that staff have included and kept families informed is also highly valued.

*'...I like the way The Housing Connection has involved me in her life. Even though I am not family I am treated as if I am..'*

People also value the way the service supports their son or daughter. The fact that all staff are known to the family is also of high importance.

For those families with a longer involvement there is a sense of entitlement and a clear sense of belonging to the organisation. There is a shared history and they have played a

role in that history. With this also comes a very high expectation that the Housing Connection will always be there.

*"...staff gave me a guarantee that they will always be there for my son when I am no longer around to care from him..."*

There is also a high level of appreciation and almost gratitude for all The Housing Connection has done for them and their family

*"..I really do not know what we would have done if The Housing Connection was not there for us...we owe them a lot..."*

***What should the Housing Connection do more/less of? What must the Housing Connection never lose? What would you say to other people who want to use The Housing Connection?***

"More of the same" but with a caution about "growth" was the clear response. Whilst many families accepted that the organisation needed to change to accommodate the new ways of funding and the new ways services will be provided to people with disability, there was concern about growing too big. The concern was about the impact growth may have on the sense of belonging and relationships with staff.

*"...Opportunities to work with others, particularly experts in ageing and vocational assistance was seen as reasonable to focus on into the future..."*

For new families their needs are different and the message was to build new opportunities to involve families and others in the organisation. Opportunities for volunteering and getting involved in social functions was seen as valuable.

## *Analysis and Key Messages*

<b>Element</b>	<b>Key Messages</b>
<b>Aspirations</b>	A very strong legacy exists and an expectation that The Housing Connection will always be there for their children when they are no longer around or able to care
<b>Strategies</b>	Ageing carers and forward planning a central focus. Access to information to help build decisions I also important to this group. Clear divide between new people to the organizations and those who were here from the beginning. Sense of ownership and entitlement quite high with long term members of the THC community. Opportunities to connect and build relationships amongst carers/families is valued.
<b>Organisational Skills</b>	Very high level of satisfaction and trust. Size of organization discussed and there is a concern that a bigger organisation may jeopardize sense of ownership. History of organization and how it works with other organizations should be documented
<b>Human Resources</b>	Relationship with staff is highly valued. Who works at the Housing Connection, and which families are involved is important to people. Opportunities for volunteering is seen as a way of engaging new people and their families
<b>Systems and Infrastructure</b>	This Project used as an example of how the organisation involves people in decisions. Making information more readily available could be improved. Newsletters, information sessions seen as important. Building a community rather than focus on program delivery was a clear message
<b>Organisational Structure</b>	Participants commented on the accessibility of staff across the organization and viewed them as ‘front door’ to information and support. There was a differing level of understanding of whom to access to get information and more importantly some newer people were not sure if it was ‘‘appropriate’’ to contact the CEO or Manager regarding a specific issue.
<b>Culture</b>	Strong legacy based culture exists. There is evidence of the divisions between those people who have had a long involvement in the organisation versus those who have had a relatively short involvement. Expectations are different and sense of ownership is different as is level of involvement.

## Fish Market Picnic Conversation

### Raw Responses

*THC is the best ever organisation....make sure you write that down*

*Everyone is great here...they care...*

*..I always come to the staff when I have a problem...*

*...I trust "Ann Louise... I can trust The Housing Connection...*

*Best organisation ever*

*..I don't know what I would have done if I did not have The Housing Connection...*

*I would have no friends if I did not have The Housing Connection...*

*I am living in my own flat because of the Housing Connection..*

*... I got sick and The Housing Connection team helped me through my sickness...*

*...I reached my goal and went to NASA...I always wanted to do that...now I have Another goal to go on a cruise...to save help to arrange carer*

*Supporting transition to work*

*If you did not have the Housing connection in your life?*

*Just live with my parents always*

*Be isolated and lonely*

*money and go on a cruise....that's what I get help to do..."*

*More organised outings*

*Trying to save up to get a boat and need a games room – pool table with a big TV. That's what The Housing Connection should do...*

*Relationships amongst members*

*I used to live at Greenwich Hospital. Lived there a long time. I live in the community now. I work. Sometimes I think about the people I knew at the Hospital and wonder where they got their help. I am lucky. I came to the Housing Connection.*

*...When you have a disability and know it, you need to be able to get help from people you really trust...people who will not take advantage of you...*

*Support people to be independent*

*Living skills*

*With THC I would have no friends, no carers no one to support*

*Looking for a job – a paid job- Would like to be a social educator, but I do not have the patience*

*Part of Greenwich Hospital*

*It was an institution – sometimes I miss it*

*Some people left and went to another house*

*Happy where I am living now*

*Work at Target and I love it*

*Make sure there is enough money keep on applying for funding*

*Make sure clients are happy with the support they receive*

*Make sure all staff find more work amore activities*

*How to grow – grow but not too much because then not everyone will know each other*

*If it does grow, grow in little and other areas*

*Maybe one in other places around Sydney*

*Keep it small that way*

*Need to see the phone number bigger*

*Not enough accommodation*

*Definitely help plan with ageing –talking about an elderly village – need to support people in their old age*

*Need a beer fridge*

*Go way to Queensland*

*My dream is to own my own flat, have lots of friends. I have a swimming pool in my dream and a dog*

*I want a secure place when I grow old*

*Life skills*

*Chatswood for 12 months*

*Living and making the most of it*

*Dad has moved in- sold jewelry originally*

*Retired now*

*I get too much support now- don't really need it all*

*In my perfect world I am working, in an IT company in North Sydney, I am busy and I am happy*

*I worry about most things*

*If I have a problems I can always talk*

*I went to NASA with Tracey-*

*It's a long way away. Now I want to go on a cruise and I get help form THC to save up*

*I have worked at Chatswood Industries for a long time- one day I will retire and I suppose I will need more help when I am older*

*I have my own flat in Milsons Point. If I have a problem I speak with Jane*

## Young People and Their Parents- Pizza Evening Conversation

### Raw Responses

*Post school- ability to look for work*

*There should be some work experience opportunities*

*Anything in the media, video editing*

*Help me to find work*

*Help me develop my attitude towards work*

*The help we got from Lawrence and Sacha was amazing. They made us feel like we trusted them. They made us feel secure and confident*

*Want support to make decisions. Information*

*Want support for overall well being*

*Was surprised that the service was so individually focused. Would like some group based opportunities*

*Want my some to help establish friendships*

*Really want friendships*

*Want work experience with technology –*

*Facebook can be a good way to establish friendships for new young people. We should set up Facebook support*

*Referred by school- just felt secure with The Housing Connection Team. Felt I could trust Lawrence. He was experienced*

*Never used other services before. Went straight from school to community. Do not know what is out there*

*Did use Autism Support Group but sometime people do not see themselves as belonging to that group*

*Not very experienced in suing services for my son*

*My culture there is a lot of emphasis on education. I want my son to finish a degree at university*

*Want him to ultimately be independent*

*Our aim is for him to go to uni – do media arts*

*Aside from course constantly worry about him being able to look after himself*

*He is not street wise – cannot understand or appreciate other people's behavior. Worry he is at risk. He understands but cannot read between the lines.*

*Friendships is what is important*

*We want what all parents want. Or him to grow up, have a family, be happy, be healthy*

*I want to make sure he is ok when he is older*

*I know very little about what services are out there. What help he needs*

*He looks okay and so people think he is okay. He is not always okay.*

*I want a job*

*I like it here. I come in and Lawrence helps me*

*Sacha helps me with a job*

*I want to be independent*

*I do lots of things at home. I like to cook. I cook once a week. That is my job.*

*It is hard to get a job, but in order to help him I got a job with him at Woolworths. I decided to apply with him and we both got the job. After a while I left. That is what us parents do*

*I really like art. I love my photography*

*I used to be on Facebook, but I was obsessed. Kept waking up to see if I had any messages. Could not sleep*

*Yes I am on Facebook, but I do not have many friends yet*

*I am really into computers*

*I would like to go out sometimes*

*This is different to school. I miss school sometimes. I actually miss my friends and going to class and the teachers*

*What is with the name? It does not really tell us what you are about, I did not know that there was housing services. I just thought this was a job support agency. That's why we use it...*

**Raw Responses**

*I was involved from the beginning. We all have a story about our children*

*I am just a neighbor. But I want to be here for her. She is part of my family. I have been involved in her life for a long time*

*I like the way The Housing Connection has involved me in her life. Even though I am not family I am treated as if I am*

*My situation is different. I have just recently been involved and my daughter is an adult but she only just was recently diagnosed. I knew something was different, but now I know.*

*We were referred to Housing Connection so she can get some help with living independently. She also has behavior issues*

*My relationship with her is different. She does not tell me anything. This is the only way I can find out how she is going*

*Its information about what to do. Where to go that I need most. I am also dealing with her sisters who are angry about their sister being different*

*I have been told The Housing Connection will always be there for my child. It is the time I worry about. I do not want to burden my other children when I am not here.*

*I do not know what I would have done without this service. I would not have survived*

*There is a long history and yes I suppose I was part of the beginning*

*The most important thing is the staff. We have had occasion when the staff have not quite fit the organisation and you can tell that they leave because here it is all about the person*

*"...staff gave me a guarantee that they will always be there for my son when I am no longer around to care from him..."*

*I just cannot talk highly enough about the people who work with my son*

*Yes there have been issues and problems with the service. My son left the house several times and ended on a train out of town. But he was safe.*

*Not sure what the future of the organisation should be, but I just want to know that my child will be cared for when I am no longer around.*

*Always concerned with organisations talk about the future. It's as if all the good things of the past have to be defended...*

*“..I really do not know what we would have done if The Housing Connection was not there for us...we owe them a lot...”*

*“...I have not been to a meeting...do not really get to meet anyone..I would like to meet other families..”*

*“...We always knew something was different about her but were very confronted when we got the diagnosis “the label” when she was 32 years old...” It was a relief but also very confronting. She took it better than us...”*