



Inclusive housing

The Summer Foundation position statement on the Disability Royal Commission's final report

30 October 2023

Some of the most marginalised people in Australia were heard for the first time during the Disability Royal Commission. More than 10,000 people shared their stories via public hearings, submissions or private sessions. People with disability have given a lot to the Royal Commission and expectations are high for a comprehensive response and tangible action from governments.

Addressing the level and scope of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation evidenced in the Royal Commission is a monumental task that will require significant resources and commitment beyond the [\\$4.25 million](#) allocated to the 2-year Commonwealth Disability Royal Commission Taskforce. Timely analysis, prioritisation, coordination and implementation of the policy ideas in the 222 recommendations for improving laws, policies, structures and practices is needed. It is critical that the people with disability who gave so much to this Royal Commission benefit from some quick wins as well as see tangible actions to address the more complex and systemic challenges.

The current system of provider regulation and safeguards for NDIS participants is clearly not adequate. Many group homes already operate like mini-institutions. They lack the basic customer service elements that are standard in other sectors. There is however a risk that governments will add another layer of regulation that will increase the paperwork and do little to improve the lives of people with disability. Additional regulation also has the potential to make services more institutional and impinge on rights.

The emphasis on inclusive housing and inclusive lives in the final report is welcome. Social connection and access to the community reduces the risk of exploitation, violence and abuse.

Federal, state and territory governments need to partner with people with disability and the sector to build on existing work and evidence, rather than duplicating efforts. Real solutions need to reimagine these systems “in partnership with people with disability, with their voices at the centre of reforms”.¹

¹ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (2023) 'Executive Summary, Our vision for an inclusive Australia and Recommendations' p94. Link [here](#).

Housing recommendations

The Summer Foundation welcomes the emphasis on inclusive housing in the final report with 11 recommendations related to housing.

Phasing out of group homes

The recommendation (7.43) to phase out group homes within the next 15 years is both feasible and economically sound.

Both the human cost evidenced in the Royal Commission report and the economic cost demands transition to more contemporary housing. Many older group homes are “mini-institutions” that are not physically designed to foster independence. More contemporary models of disability housing that incorporate technology and clever design have the potential to reduce the cost of paid support. There is also a significant [economic cost](#) to the violence abuse and neglect that occurs in some of these settings.

We also need to plan for generational change and make sure we are building social infrastructure that is future proof. It seems highly unlikely that many NDIS participants under 25 today (or their families) are going to choose to live in a group home in decades to come.

Separate housing and support provider

The recommendation (7.41) to rectify [third line forcing](#) is a potential quick win. This common practice in disability housing is not accepted in any other sector. Explicit timeframes for the transition away from allowing a single organisation to be both the landlord and the support provider will stop some of the ‘commodification’ of the most vulnerable NDIS participants.

National adoption of the mandatory minimum accessible standards in new housing

Given the evidence of the impact of unsuitable housing on the lives of people with disability and our ageing population, the recommendation (7.35) for the immediate national adoption of minimum accessible standards in all new housing provides another potential quick win. The NSW and WA state governments need to follow the leadership shown by other jurisdictions and adopt mandatory [Australian Building Codes Board \(ABCB\) Livable Housing Design Standards](#).

Minimum service standards in boarding houses

One recommendation (7.38) that needs immediate action is the introduction of minimum service standards, monitoring and oversight in boarding houses that currently have little regulation. This will address some of the most squalid living conditions and extreme cases of exploitation that have been described as ‘[human trafficking](#)’.

Summer Foundation commitment

The Summer Foundation is committed to working with and for Australians with disability to deliver the following initiatives:

Choice of housing

- We will continue to provide people with disability with the information, resources and services they need to understand their rights, understand their housing and support options and exercise real choice about where they live and who they live with (via the [Housing Hub](#)).
- We will pilot a Home and Living peer support service that enables people with disability to access the wisdom and insights of peers.

Accessible mainstream housing

- We will continue to lead a national coalition of health, disability, housing and older persons organisations and fund the [Building Better Homes](#) campaign until there is national adoption of minimum accessible standards in new housing.
- We will work with governments to ensure the implementation of minimum accessible standards is monitored and impact is measured in each jurisdiction.

Innovation in built design

- We will co-design and build a new, contemporary typology of disability housing to meet the needs of people who are missing out in the current SDA market.

Support provided within housing

- We will co-design a framework and principles to guide contemporary models of support that are bespoke to the needs and preferences of specific groups of co-located NDIS participants.
- We will explore and co-design new models of governance that increase the agency of people living in disability housing.

Evaluation of housing outcomes

- We are partnering with La Trobe University to deliver a [longitudinal study](#) that is systematically investigating the experience, outcomes and economic impact of people with disability moving into a range of disability housing models.

Quality of disability support

- We will scale and continue to evaluate a co-designed intervention ([Participant Led Videos](#)) to improve the quality of support provided to people with disability.
- We will co-design and evaluate a range of new evidence based resources to improve the quality of support provided to people with disability.

Increase community participation and social connections

- We will evaluate and scale an evidence based intervention ([M-ComConnect](#)) that supports people with disability to build social connection and increase their participation in the community.

Asks of federal, state and territory governments

The Summer Foundation is calling on the federal, state and territory governments to:

Build on existing work: Make use of emerging evidence provided by research, co-design output and projects that demonstrate innovation and potential solutions.

Scale evidence based solutions: Work with the sector to evaluate, iteratively improve and fund potential solutions at scale.

Design alternative approaches to Supported Independent Living (SIL): Work with the sector to design new evidence based funding models that drive efficient, high quality support that is tailored to the specific needs and preferences of each NDIS participant.

The Summer Foundation looks forward to working with people with disability, governments and the wider disability sector to support the Commonwealth Disability Royal Commission Taskforce to achieve its objectives related to housing in the next 2 years.