



Improving Medium Term Accommodation

March 2023

Introduction

Medium-term accommodation (MTA) is an NDIS temporary housing support that can be used by NDIS participants (participants) waiting to move into their long-term housing.¹ MTA has the potential to be a useful part of the solution to divert people away from aged care, hospital and other inappropriate settings. However, currently it is difficult to access, lacks quality standards and is poorly understood. Along with timely and accurate decisions on long-term housing and support, MTA can be part of a larger solution that supports people with disability to have choice and control over their lives.

This is an update to Summer Foundation's existing policy position statement on MTA from January 2021.²

What does success look like?

- MTA is used for limited periods of time as participants have a timely and accurate Home and Living decision to explore their long term housing and support early.
- NDIS participants understand their temporary housing options and are supported to access high quality MTA that meets their needs and preferences.
- MTA is used to divert people with disability away from hospital, residential aged care (RAC) and other inappropriate settings.

¹ National Disability Insurance Agency (2022), 'Medium Term Accommodation Guidelines, 20 June 2022. Link [here](#)

² Summer Foundation (2021) Medium Term Accommodation Policy Position Statement, January, link [here](#)

Discussion points

1. Quality of MTA and meeting need

MTA is often of low quality and does not meet the accessibility needs or preferences of participants. MTA does not need to be registered with the NDIS and therefore there are no standards of quality or accessibility that can be enforced. MTA usually presents in 2 options:

1. Hotel rooms and serviced apartments. These settings allow a participant to live in the community but do not always include accessible features which enable a person to build skills and engage with their community. These settings can also be costly, sometimes requiring the participant to fund a portion of their stay.
2. Congregate or shared housing. While shared living suits some, many people experience a lack of choice or control in such environments, with limited opportunities for community participation and capacity building.³ These settings do not allow for privacy, maintaining independence or for participants to utilise their own supports.

MTA funding should be flexible enough to allow for individually tailored housing that is safe for people with complex needs. There should be a range of MTA options in the community that are high quality and meet the diverse needs of people with disability.

Recommendation:

1. The NDIA must create quality standards for MTA which require the housing to be high quality, with a range of accessible design categories, locations and shared and private options that meet the individual needs of participants.

2. Long-term housing and supports

To limit the need for MTA, the NDIA must ensure that participants are funded to access appropriate long-term housing and supports as early as possible. People with complex needs can get stuck in MTA for months or years waiting on a NDIA Home and Living decision.⁴

Though participants report long wait times,⁵ recently there have been small, positive steps in the timeliness of decision-making. The NDIA has reported an increasing percentage of Home and Living decisions being made in under 14 days (14% to 16%).⁶ With the right process changes, it is possible for most Home and Living decisions to be made in 10 days on average.

Recommendation:

2. Home and Living decisions must be made in 10 days on average to reduce the need for MTA. If MTA is needed, it is utilised for a defined period of time only.

³ Oliver, S., Gosden-Kaye, E.Z., Winkler, D., & Douglas, J.M. (2020). "The Outcomes of Individualized Housing for People with Disability and Complex Needs: A Scoping Review." Disability and Rehabilitation. link [here](#).

⁴ Summer Foundation (2020) 'Transitional housing and support in Australia for people with disability: Environmental scan'. Link [here](#).

⁵ Winkler, D., Brown, M., D'Cruz, K., Oliver, S., Mulherin, P. (2022). Getting the NDIS back on track: A survey of people with disability. Summer Foundation. link [here](#)

⁶ NDIS (2022) Quarterly Report to Disability Ministers, Q2 2022-2023, 31 December, link [here](#)

3. Younger People in Residential Aged Care (YPIRAC)

MTA is rarely used to support younger people to move out of or prevent entry to aged care. As of October 2020, MTA was in the plans of less than 5 participants of the 2,934 YPIRAC.⁷

Preventing entry to RAC

MTA should be more widely used to prevent younger people from being forced into aged care where no appropriate long-term housing can be immediately found. Most younger people enter aged care from a hospital.⁸ If long-term housing and support was funded in the plan of every young person in hospital and those at risk of entering aged care, if needed MTA could be used while their long-term housing and support is being established.

Supporting exit from RAC

Once a younger person enters aged care, it is significantly more challenging for them to transition to individualised housing. The average length of stay for YPIRAC is 5 years.⁶ If MTA was in the NDIS plans of more YPIRAC, it could be used to support participants to safely transition out of RAC and trial different styles of housing.

Currently, most YPIRAC cannot access MTA due to restrictive eligibility requirements. Under the MTA guidelines, to be eligible for MTA participants must meet all 3 criteria:

- Have a confirmed long-term housing solution,
- Be temporarily unable to move into this long-term housing,
- Cannot stay in their current accommodation.⁹

For participants discharging from hospital or a justice setting, they only need to be eligible for Home and Living supports to access MTA.⁹ These more flexible requirements should also be applied to YPIRAC and others at risk of entry to RAC.

“Due to my MS deteriorating, I had to have surgery, I spent 3 months in hospital. I was in limbo, I wasn’t sick enough to justify a hospital bed but was unable to return home. I have no idea how I ended up in a nursing home, I don’t know what was happening behind the scenes. I had a case worker from MS and she came in and said all excitedly “You can go home we’ve found you a place to live”. They never said it was a nursing home, it wasn’t until I got there, I found out.”

– Katy Skene, young person who lived in RAC

Recommendation

3. MTA must be funded in the NDIS plans of all YPIRAC and younger people at risk of entry to aged care.

⁷ Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee, October 2020, NDIA SQ21-000043, 2020-21 Additional Estimates, Answer to Question on Notice, Social Services Portfolio.

⁸ AIHW (2022). Younger people in residential aged care. link [here](#)

⁹ National Disability Insurance Agency (2022), ‘Medium Term Accommodation Guidelines, 20 June 2022. Link [here](#)

4. Capacity building and understanding medium-term and transitional housing options

There is a lack of understanding of MTA and transitional housing options among participants, supporters and the sector. Participants might not be aware of the availability of or their eligibility for MTA or transitional housing and potential the benefits to them.

When participants are in need of temporary accommodation, they can use NDIS-funded MTA or state block-funded transitional housing. Suitability for transitional housing or MTA is dependent on their eligibility, the needs of the individual and the supports they require.

Before a participant can utilise MTA, the NDIA must put in place a Home and Living plan. This plan should include adequate funding for support coordination to ensure the participant is well supported and builds independence, minimising the chance they will return to unsuitable housing. Also, the plan must ensure allied health support to both prevent loss of functional capacity while living in MTA and facilitate the transition into long-term housing.

“Young people don’t really need to go into a nursing home if you’ve got the funding. When this first happened we didn’t know what to do, there was no one there. There needs to be more support for young people in hospital and for families to make decisions”

– Robert*, family member

Recommendation:

4. The NDIA must fund capacity building for participants and their supports to understand MTA, transitional and long-term housing options. Summer Foundation’s expertise and [Housing Hub resources](#) can support this work.

5. Participants undergoing reviews and appeals

Under current NDIS process, participants cannot access MTA while undergoing an internal review or external appeal of their Home and Living decision. This is not a policy decision but a technicality of NDIS plan management. When a participant is undergoing a review or appeal, their Home and Living funding is not active, making them ineligible for MTA.

Without MTA funding, participants may have no choice but to remain in their existing inappropriate housing for months or years. If a person is living in appropriate housing, a review or appeal should not prevent them from receiving MTA funding. This inappropriate housing could include RAC, hospital, or where there is a risk of homelessness.

Recommendations:

5. Allow MTA to be used when a participant is undergoing a review or appeal related to appropriate long-term housing and support.