

Achieving the YPIRAC Strategy

October 2022

Introduction

The Federal Government's [Younger People in Residential Aged Care \(YPIRAC\) Targets and Strategy](#) seek to ensure that unless there are exceptional circumstances, there are:

- No people under the age of 65 entering residential aged care by 2022
- No people under the age of 45 living in residential aged care by 2022
- No people under the age of 65 living in residential aged care by 2025

There are currently 3,163 younger people, under the age of 65, living in residential aged care (RAC) facilities across the country.¹ Of these, 2,530 are National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants.² Each month 35 younger people continue to enter RAC, with most younger people entering via hospital due to ineffective interfaces between the disability, health and housing systems.

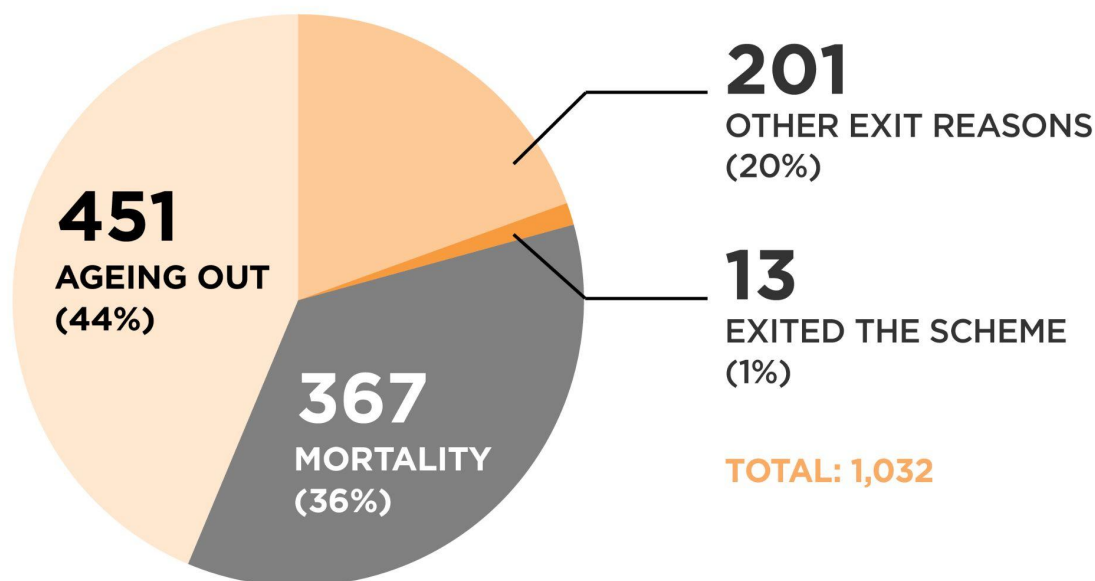
More younger people are entering RAC each month than the total number of younger people who have exited from RAC into Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) in the last financial year.

¹ Current as at 31 March 2022. See: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) 'Younger people in residential aged care'. Link [here](#).

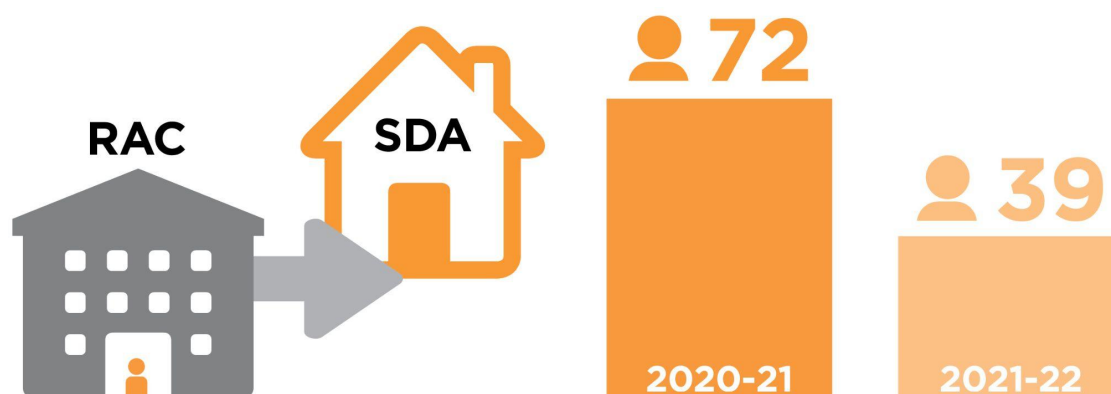
² National Disability Insurance Agency (2022) 'NDIS Quarterly Report to disability ministers: 30 June 2022' p154. Link [here](#).

Exit Reasons (from YPIRAC cohort)

January 2021 – December 2021



The number of YPIRAC is falling, but in most cases it is not for the right reasons. The drop is mainly attributed to younger people dying in RAC or 'ageing out' of the cohort when they turn 65.³ SDA is part of the solution; however, fewer people are moving from RAC into SDA. Last financial year, fewer people were supported to move into SDA (39) than in the 2020-2021 financial year (72). This demonstrates that the achievement of good outcomes for younger people is slowing.



Source: National Disability Insurance Agency (2022) 'NDIS Quarterly Report to disability ministers: 30 June 2022'. Link [here](#); and Australian Government (2022) 'Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee: Answers to Questions on Notice.' Question No: SQ22-000011. Link [here](#).

³ Winkler D and Mulherin P (2022) 'Younger people in aged care is a problem: will the government keep its stated commitment?' Pro Bono Australia, 4 May 2022. Link [here](#).

Natural attrition is not an acceptable way for the YPIRAC targets to be met. A more strategic and collaborative approach is required to achieve good outcomes for younger people currently in, or at risk of entering RAC.⁴

The Federal Government must work with younger people and the disability sector to identify the policy and operational measures that need to be implemented to achieve the YPIRAC Strategy as a matter of urgency. Monitoring progress, identifying obstacles and adjusting the strategy where necessary is key to ensuring no younger person is forced to live in RAC.

Progress to date

Aged Care Royal Commission (ACRC)

The ACRC's [Recommendations and Final Report](#) align with the YPIRAC Strategy by emphasising that no person under the age of 65 should be living in aged care, except in exceptional circumstances.⁵ The ACRC recommended that the Federal Government immediately put in place the means to achieve, monitor and report on progress towards the YPIRAC Strategy.

Aged Care Assessment Guidelines

Amendments to [Aged Care Assessment Guidelines](#) made in 2021 provide safeguards to prevent younger people from unnecessarily entering RAC. NDIS participants (participants) must first be referred to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) YPIRAC Planners and Accommodation Team for support and guidance to explore alternative accommodation. The NDIA must confirm that no other housing options are available before a participant can be referred to RAC. This has improved hospital discharge processes for participants, who are now less likely to be referred to an ACAT before all appropriate housing and support options have been properly explored.

Tune Review

A significant outcome of the [Tune Review](#) was the enactment of the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Participant Service Guarantee and Other Measures) Act 2022* (Cth) (NDIS Amendment Act). The NDIS Amendment Act puts the NDIA's [Participant Service Guarantee](#) (PSG) into legislation.

Ensuring participants can access the supports they need in a timely manner reduces risks for those who are in, or at risk of entering RAC. Many participants enter RAC because they do not have funding at an adequate level for housing and support, leaving them with nowhere else to go. They get stuck in RAC because of significant delays in accessing funding for appropriate housing and supports.

⁴ Brown M, Condi A, Davis E, Goodwin I, Winkler D and Douglas J (2021) 'Young people in residential aged care: Is Australia on track to meet its targets?' *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 00, 1–15. Link [here](#).

⁵ Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (2021) 'Final Report - List of Recommendations' p256-257. Link [here](#).

YPIRAC Planners

In late 2021, the NDIA implemented YPIRAC Planners to deliver specialist planning for participants who are in, or at risk of entering RAC. Most often younger people are not adequately supported by YPIRAC Planners to understand the different housing and support options that are available to them. The NDIA has stated that it supports YPIRAC who have expressed no intention to leave RAC, to stay in RAC, unless they change their mind.⁶ As at 30 June 2022, only 652 participants in RAC (25%) had a goal to leave aged care.⁷ This suggests that there is a lack of a proactive and committed approach within the NDIA to supporting participants to consider a life outside of RAC.

YPIRAC System Coordinators

In 2021, the Federal Government invested over \$10 million to create a national network of System Coordinators to help YPIRAC find age-appropriate housing and support. System Coordinators work with YPIRAC who are not participants.

In late 2021, the Federal Government invested an additional \$16 million into the YPIRAC System Coordinator Program to enable the continued engagement with YPIRAC. It is important that this increase in funding also includes the upskilling and training of System Coordinators, to build their capacity to effectively support YPIRAC to safely transition out of RAC with the housing and supports they need to live well in the community.

Increased housing accessibility

State and territory governments have recognised that increasing options for accessible housing gives younger people safer alternatives to RAC. This is particularly important for YPIRAC who are not eligible for SDA, including those who are not eligible for the NDIS. Recent changes to the [National Construction Code](#) adopt the Silver Level of accessibility set by Livable Housing Australia's [Livable Housing Design Guidelines](#) (LHDG). Additionally, state and territory governments are working to ensure public and community housing are provided at greater accessibility levels.

Homes constructed to LHDG Silver Level will not be accessible for many people with high and complex needs. People who are dependent on accessibility at the Gold or Platinum level require wider internal spaces and a shower and bedroom on the ground floor, among other improvements. Ensuring a mix of accessible homes is made available to meet the needs of people with disability at the LHDG Silver, Gold and Platinum Level standards will improve choices and ensure accessibility for people with disability who might otherwise be forced to live in RAC.⁸

⁶ Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee (2022) 'Senate Estimates - Additional Estimates, 17 February 2022'. Link [here](#).

⁷ National Disability Insurance Agency (2022) 'NDIS Quarterly Report to disability ministers: 30 June 2022' p39. Link [here](#).

⁸ Summer Foundation (2022) 'A more inclusive and just society for people with disability' p17. Link [here](#).

Achieving the YPIRAC Targets

Timely and accurate decision-making

All participants in, and at risk of entering RAC require NDIS funding for housing and supports but there are significant delays to this occurring. The PSG states that participants' plans should be approved within 56 days, or 50 days for plan reviews - including adequate funding for housing and support.⁹ However, a survey of 172 participants who were supported by the Housing Hub's Tenancy Matching Service in their application for SDA funding has found that the NDIA takes a median of 97 days to make initial funding decisions about housing and supports.¹⁰ Delays in the provision of needed supports have significant consequences to the health and wellbeing of people with complex needs.

"Biggest thing is time to reach a decision, ridiculous to be waiting so long for personal care approval when I've had my disability for 40+ years and there's 40+ years documentation."

Robert - Participant

The NDIA has committed to making significant improvements in the timeliness of Home and Living decisions.¹¹ Ensuring the availability of NDIS funding for SDA and supports within 10 days will prevent hospital discharge delays and close the gates to RAC for participants with complex needs. The Home and Living Panel (Panel) is capable of making decisions within a 10 day timeframe.¹² Timely decisions allow participants to explore housing options with clarity on the funding available to them, and establish a model of support that best meets their needs.¹³

In an effort to improve decision-making, the NDIA's new Home and Living [supporting evidence form](#) incorporates Home and Living decisions with statutory planning phases for decisions including Participant Requested Reviews, Agency Initiated Plan Reviews and Scheduled Plan Reviews.¹⁴ The Down to 10 Days Alliance's [discussion paper on faster, accurate decisions on housing and supports](#) identifies additional changes that can be implemented at an administrative and procedural level to improve the likelihood of Home and Living decisions being made within 10 days.

⁹ National Disability Insurance Agency (2022) 'Participant Service Guarantee'. Link [here](#).

¹⁰ Public Interest Advocacy Centre and Housing Hub (2022) 'Housing Delayed and Denied: NDIA Decision-Making on Specialist Disability Accommodation Funding' p20. Link [here](#).

¹¹ National Disability Insurance Agency (2022) 'NDIS Quarterly Report to disability ministers: 30 June 2022' p81. Link [here](#).

¹² The NDIA closed 287 Home and Living applications within two weeks from 1 April to 30 June 2022. See: National Disability Insurance Agency (2022) 'NDIS Quarterly Report to disability ministers: 30 June 2022' p81. Link [here](#).

¹³ Douglas J, Winkler D, Oliver S, Liddicoat S and D'Cruz K (2022) 'Moving into new housing designed for people with disability: preliminary evaluation of outcomes'. *Disability and Rehabilitation*. Link [here](#).

¹⁴ National Disability Insurance Agency (2022) 'Home and living supporting evidence form' Link [here](#).

Increasing the capacity and consistency of the Home and Living Panel

The NDIA has committed to increasing the number of Home and Living Panel hearings and Panel staff, to process requests in a more timely way.¹⁵ However, staff do not receive any specialised training for their role on the Home and Living Panel, and do not apply any Panel-specific policies.¹⁶ Decisions that do not reflect participants' needs and preferences, or the [NDIS legislation](#), may still be made. The NDIA must provide specialised training for Panel staff, to ensure they have the required expertise to assess complex requests for housing and supports and implement a consistent approach to making timely and accurate funding decisions that support participants to live well in the community.

"Maybe walk in my shoes for 48 hours, instead of saying things are unreasonable and not necessary."

Ellen – Participant

"The NDIS need to understand the complexity of living with a disability and be trained to respond with care and compassion."

Jason – Participant

Determining the right funding for housing and supports requires consideration of evidence on functional capacity and the participant's preferences about where and how they would like to live. Participants are best placed to know what is important to them and what will best suit their needs. This reflects the underlying principle of the NDIS to give participants choice and control.¹⁷ It also highlights the central role that suitable housing has to a person being able to live an ordinary life.¹⁸

Supports for participants in, and at risk of entering RAC

The NDIA needs to streamline its approach to informing participants of housing and support options. Participants must be supported to understand the benefits of living in SDA and other housing options, including increased choice and control and capacity for independence. NDIA staff and funded support workers must have adequate knowledge and capacity to support YPIRAC to transition from institutional or other inappropriate housing settings to living well in the community. This includes understanding and addressing individual barriers to leaving.¹⁹

Participants who are exploring housing options require specialist support coordination that focuses on housing needs. The NDIS funds Specialist Support Coordination (Level 3); and should ensure adequate funding is made available to all YPIRAC.

¹⁵ National Disability Insurance Agency (2022) 'NDIS Quarterly Report to disability ministers: 30 June 2022' p81. Link [here](#).

¹⁶ Freedom of Information decision released pursuant to request reference NDIA 21.22-0422 and associated materials. See: Public Interest Advocacy Centre and Housing Hub (2022) 'Housing Delayed and Denied: NDIA Decision-Making on Specialist Disability Accommodation Funding' p16. Link [here](#).

¹⁷ *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (Cth) s4. Link [here](#).

¹⁸ Public Interest Advocacy Centre and Housing Hub (2022) 'Housing Delayed and Denied: NDIA Decision-Making on Specialist Disability Accommodation Funding' p14. Link [here](#).

¹⁹ Summer Foundation (2022) 'A more inclusive and just society for people with disability' p20. Link [here](#).

Every participant in, and at risk of entering RAC should have at least 40 hours of Level 3 support coordination funding included in their NDIS plans to enable them to explore and then request the housing and supports they require. It is essential that these specialist support coordinators are trained in Home and Living supports and processes, and have the skills and experience required to assist participants to submit quality Home and Living requests.

"I don't have a support coordinator in my NDIS plan, who could make sure I get what I need including moving out [of RAC]. My current case manager said she doesn't know anything about housing and can't help me."

Chloe - Participant

The Housing Hub recently established a Targeted Housing [Support Coordination Service](#) for home and living supports. The service is focused on quality housing outcomes and supporting participants to explore housing options, gather and develop evidence for Home and Living requests and submit applications to the NDIA. This service requires a specialised approach and specific skills to navigate multiple systems and services to support the transition of the younger person out of aged care.

Supports for non-participants in, and at risk of entering RAC

Palliative care

Younger people requiring palliative care services are often referred to RAC where their support needs cannot be met at home. The Aged Care Supplementary Guidelines states that younger people requiring palliative care should be encouraged to access supports and services that are appropriate to their age and palliative care needs.²⁰ Younger people at risk of entering RAC must be supported to fully consider and explore these options before being referred to an ACAT.

"More hospice options that are age-appropriate are needed to give people better quality of life at the end of their life. There also needs to be much better communication between staff and families, as we as between government agencies such as Health, NDIS and the aged care sector/facilities."

Rebecca - Family member

Non-residents

Younger people with complex needs who are not Australian residents are at an increased risk of entering RAC because of their ineligibility for the NDIS and other support services. Without dedicated support and interventions, they will continue to be bounced between the health, disability and aged care systems. It is critical that the housing and support needs of non-residents are properly understood. All levels of government must work together to establish a package of supports for non-residents to cover their needs.

²⁰ Australian Government (2021) 'Aged Care Assessment Supplementary Guidelines for Younger People' p12. Link [here](#).

Independent support and capacity building for YPIRAC

False perceptions continue to be held that RAC is an appropriate option for younger people. It is not often understood that their needs and preferences can be better met outside of RAC. Coordinated service offerings, which could include [Individualised Living Options](#) and/or other bespoke solutions, should be better understood and offered to younger people currently in, and at risk of entering RAC. These options can offer capacity building and independent community living. In contrast, inappropriately placing younger people into RAC forces them into isolation and inhibits their capacity for independence and community participation. YPIRAC should not be restricted to the supports and services provided by the aged care facility. They need independent and skilled support to realise a life outside of aged care. The NDIA and all levels of government must work with the sector to provide independent information and expert capacity building for YPIRAC.²¹

"I would have liked outside support, someone who wasn't working in the hospital or nursing home's best interests. I was always going to leave the nursing home."

Martha – Participant

The NDIA must fund participants with additional supports that include capacity building, community participation and development, and regular contact from YPIRAC Planners and System Coordinators. Similar supports for YPIRAC who are not participants must also be provided.

Conclusion

Significant progress has been made in reducing admissions to RAC, but little progress has been made on supporting younger people to live well in the community, after leaving RAC. Achieving the YPIRAC targets requires commitment at all levels of government and effective processes through the NDIA. Systems change is needed to ensure younger people with complex needs have access to the long-term housing and supports they need. The YPIRAC Strategy can still be successful, through the implementation of policy and operational measures that improve the disability/health/housing interface. Continued evaluation of progress towards the YPIRAC targets, and adjustment of the strategic interventions, will help ensure a sustainable all-of-government and cross-systems approach to ensuring no younger person is forced to live in RAC.

²¹ Winkler D and Mulherin P (2022) 'Younger people in aged care is a problem: will the government keep its stated commitment?' Pro Bono Australia, 4 May 2022. Link [here](#).