

# On-site shared support in Specialist Disability Accommodation

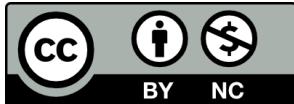
Discussion paper

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### *About Summer Foundation*

The Summer Foundation is a not-for-profit, established in 2006, committed to resolving the issue of young people living in aged care. The Summer Foundation does not own any SDA and is not a registered NDIS provider.

### *About Summer Housing*

In 2017, Summer Housing was established as a not-for-profit SDA provider. It is a separate organisation from the Summer Foundation with its own board and management team.

**<https://summerhousing.org.au/about-us/>**

### *About the Housing Hub*

The Summer Foundation developed and operates the Housing Hub – an online platform supporting housing seekers and providers to connect. The Housing Hub is free for housing seekers and providers to list properties. Providers may also pay for premium listings, or to engage the Housing Hub's Tenancy Matching Service (TMS) to identify potential tenants for SDA, and help match them with available housing.  
**<https://www.housinghub.org.au/>**

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# Executive summary

In July-September 2021 the Summer Foundation held a series of workshops and interviews with on-site support providers, specialist disability accommodation (SDA) providers, and tenants living in SDA apartments. The generous input of many stakeholders provided a rich evidence base about the challenges, benefits and opportunities associated with the support provided in co-located SDA. The main finding of the data from these workshops was that there is ample scope for service redesign and innovation to improve the quality and efficiency of support provided in co-located single occupancy dwellings.

Preliminary findings from the workshops were published in May 2022.<sup>1</sup>

The Summer Foundation is committed to working with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and all stakeholders to foster innovation in housing and support in order to achieve great outcomes for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants that are cost effective and sustainable.

Over the next month we are seeking feedback on the workshop findings and recommendations. The aims of this ongoing project are to:

1. Describe the features of high quality, cost effective on-site shared support (OSS) in SDA apartments
2. Identify what OSS providers need from the NDIA as a prerequisite to delivering high quality and cost effective services
3. Engage stakeholders in the development and implementation of a framework to design, deliver and fund high quality and cost effective shared support in co-located SDA

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<sup>1</sup> Winkler, D., Finis, C., D'Cruz, K., Mulherin, P., de Costa, M., Rathbone, A., Condi, A., Douglas, J. (2022). Support in Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) apartments: Findings from co-design workshops and interviews with tenants and providers. <https://apo.org.au/node/316938>

## Discussion topics and questions

The Summer Foundation invites feedback, comment and suggestions for improving the preliminary report and recommendations.<sup>2</sup> We are particularly interested in the following questions:

1. Are there any features of high quality, cost effective on-site shared support in SDA apartments that are missing from Chapter 2?
2. Are there any features that would benefit from further clarification or expansion?
3. What changes in service design or delivery are within the control of OSS service providers and could usefully be implemented prior to, or concurrent with, developing a framework (e.g. in communication with tenants, support worker training and in communication with support coordinators and local NDIS staff)?
4. How might OSS service providers contribute to and support the development of an effective framework for designing, delivering and funding support in co-located SDA (e.g. community of practice, develop and test cost models, communication forums)?
5. How might the NDIA work with providers to effectively address immediate challenges and test some different processes and potential solutions e.g. designating a single planner and coordinated, timely, transition times for prospective tenants of a housing development, well-planned forum of support providers who are actively involved in delivering shared support in co-located SDA?
6. Who are the potential thought leaders and innovators with the practical experience needed to rethink, redesign and document how shared and 1:1 disability support might be provided in co-located SDA dwellings?
7. What data or questions might providers use to measure the performance of the NDIS in the set up and operations of co-located SDA apartments?
8. What data or questions might tenants use to measure the performance of the NDIS in the set up and operations of co-located SDA apartments?
9. How might the SDA sector routinely collect data to monitor the performance of the NDIS?
10. What other information, resources and support are urgently needed to support stakeholders in co-located SDA including tenants, families, providers and NDIA staff?
11. Is there any other feedback you would like to provide?

Please email your thoughts and suggestions to [research@summerfoundation.org.au](mailto:research@summerfoundation.org.au) by **30 June 2022** (subject line: "OSS Discussion Paper Feedback")

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<sup>2</sup> Winkler, D., Finis, C., D'Cruz, K., Mulherin, P., de Costa, M., Rathbone, A., Condi, A., Douglas, J. (2022). Support in Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) apartments: Findings from co-design workshops and interviews with tenants and providers. <https://apo.org.au/node/316938>

# 1. Introduction

This paper draws on evidence from co-design workshops and interviews conducted in 2021 by the Summer Foundation, in association with the Living with Disability Research Centre, La Trobe University,<sup>3</sup> to describe what on-site support providers need from the NDIA to deliver high quality and cost-effective support in co-located SDA apartments.

The workshops aimed to listen to and document the perspectives of tenants, SDA providers and OSS providers. Stakeholders described the key challenges and benefits of co-located single occupancy SDA, and identified potential solutions to improve the consistency, quality and cost effectiveness of the disability supports delivered to tenants living in these dwellings.

Seven tenants of SDA apartments, 4 SDA providers and 8 OSS providers participated in the workshops. Tenants were aged from their 20s to their 60s and had previously been in a range of living situations. Most were self-managing their NDIS plans. The main disability types were muscular atrophy, neurological conditions and cerebral palsy. SDA providers were providing SDA apartments in 6 jurisdictions across Australia. OSS providers were delivering on-site support to SDA apartments in NSW, Victoria and Queensland.

## Specialist Disability Accommodation

Few things are more fundamental than having somewhere to live: one's home. In July 2008, Australia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). These rights include the right of all people "to choose their residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others, and not be obliged to live in particular living arrangements."<sup>4</sup> In 2011, the Australian Productivity Commission identified an overall lack of housing options for people with disability.<sup>5</sup> This shortage was particularly severe for those with profound disability and complex support needs who required accessible housing and higher levels of support. In addition, too many people with disability have little control over their housing and live in settings such as residential aged care, hostels, boarding houses<sup>6</sup> and group homes with people they did not choose to live with.

The launch of the NDIS in 2013 and the rollout of SDA policies and payments in 2016 are significant parts of the solution to accessible housing for people with disability.<sup>7</sup> For 6% of NDIS participants with an extreme functional impairment or very high support needs, their housing is addressed by SDA housing payments in their NDIS plan. SDA is a world-leading social policy designed to leverage private capital to build housing that maximises independence, enables the efficient provision of support and reduces the long-term liability of the NDIA.<sup>8</sup>

The SDA market has grown quickly since payments commenced in 2016, and is now estimated

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<sup>3</sup> Winkler, Di; Finis, Carolyn; D'Cruz, Kate; Mulherin, Peter; de Costa, Monique; Rathbone, Alecia; Condi, Amelia; Douglas, Jacinta. *Support in Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Apartments* (2022). Melbourne, Australia: Summer Foundation.

<sup>4</sup> UN (2006). 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.' United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Article 19.

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

<sup>5</sup> Productivity Commission (2011). 'Disability Care and Support.'

<https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/disability-support/report>

<sup>6</sup> Oliver, S., Gosden-Kaye, E., Jarman, H., Winkler, D., and Douglas, J. (2020). A Scoping Review to Explore the Experiences and Outcomes of Younger People with Disabilities in Residential Aged Care Facilities. *Brain Injury*, 34(11): 1446-1460.

<sup>7</sup> Beer, A., Flanagan, K., Verdouw, J., Lowies, B., Hemphill, L. and Zappia, G. (2019) Understanding Specialist Disability Accommodation funding, AHURI Final Report No. 310, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/310>

<sup>8</sup> Beer, A., Flanagan, K., Verdouw, J., Lowies, B., Hemphill, L. and Zappia, G. (2019) Understanding Specialist Disability Accommodation Funding, AHURI Final Report 310, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/310>

to be worth approximately \$3 billion.<sup>9</sup> According to investment fund managers, the SDA market could stimulate \$5-10 billion in private investment when supply meets the demand of the 30,000 eligible NDIS participants.<sup>10</sup>

Approximately 30,000 NDIS participants with extreme functional impairment and high support needs are expected to receive SDA funding by 2025;<sup>11</sup> however, as of March 2022 only 17,693 were receiving these payments.<sup>12</sup> The intention of SDA funding is to increase choice and control for NDIS participants, while ensuring supports are reasonable and necessary. However, group homes are still the predominant model of disability housing for people with high support needs. As of March 2022, 11,404 of the existing places in SDA were offered in homes with 4 or more residents.

An estimated two-thirds of disability group housing stock built before 2016 in Australia is old, does not meet contemporary disability housing standards and will need to be phased out or substantially upgraded. In group homes, people with disability are often segregated and live according to rigid staff routines, rosters and work priorities.<sup>13</sup> In turn, this negatively impacts the choice and control of their housing and support, as well as their community participation.<sup>14</sup> Although group homes in Australia vary in their age and configurations, residents generally have limited – if any – say about who they live with.<sup>15</sup> Beyond concerns about independence, flexibility, and choice, the ongoing Royal Commission on Disability found that people residing in group homes are vulnerable to violence, abuse and neglect.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in assessing Australia's observance of the UNCRPD, the United Nations raised concerns about "disability-specific residential institutions" that limit the autonomy of people with disability.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Assumption: \$0.5 million per enrolled dwelling (6,244), excluding in-kind. NDIA (2021). 'NDIS Quarterly Report to Disability Ministers: Q4 2020-2021.' <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/publications/quarterly-reports>

<sup>10</sup> Madhavan, D., Mulherin, P., Winkler, D. (2021). Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Investor Think Tank: Findings and Recommendations. <https://www.summerfoundation.org.au/resources/specialist-disability-accommodation-sda-investor-think-tank-findings-and-recommendations/>

<sup>11</sup> Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee (2021) 'Answer to Questions on Notice, Social Services Portfolio, Additional Estimates.' Question No: NDIA SQ21-000118. [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Senate\\_estimates/ca/2020-21\\_Additional\\_estimates](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Senate_estimates/ca/2020-21_Additional_estimates)

<sup>12</sup> NDIA (2022). 'NDIS Quarterly Report to Disability Ministers: Q3 2021-2022.' <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/publications/quarterly-reports>

<sup>13</sup> Keogh, F. (2009). 'Disability and Mental Health in Ireland: Searching out Good Practice.' <https://www.genio.ie/publications/disability-mental-health-ireland-searching-out-good-practice>

<sup>14</sup> Wiesel, I. (2011). 'Allocating Homes for People with Intellectual Disability: Needs, Mix and Choice.' *Social Policy & Administration*, 45(3), 280-298.

<sup>15</sup> Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (2020). 'Overview of Responses to Group Homes Issues Paper.' <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2020-07/Issues-paper-Group-homes.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (2020). 'Public Hearing 3: The Experience of Living in a Group Home for People with Disability.' <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/public-hearing-report-public-hearing-3-experience-living-group-home-people-disability>

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disability (2019). 'Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Australia.' UN Doc CRPD/C/AUS/CO/2-3. <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPrICAqhKb7yhsnzSGoIKOaUX8SsM2PfxU7sdcBnJQCwIRF9xTca9TaCwjm5OlnhspoVv2oxnsujKTREtaVWFxhEZM%2F0OdVJz1UEyF5leK6Ycmqrn8yzTHQCn>

By comparison, research has found that individualised housing for people with disability generates favourable outcomes. These include increased self-determination, autonomy, choice, home participation and community participation.<sup>18</sup> <sup>19</sup> People with disability who live in individualised housing can also experience improvements in functional skills, mood and social relationships.<sup>20</sup> Decreases in challenging behaviours,<sup>21</sup> as well as quality formal and informal supports have also been identified as important positive outcomes in individualised housing.<sup>22</sup>

Based on this evidence, as well as findings from the Royal Commission, it is unsurprising that many people with disability – if given the choice – are opting for more individualised housing and support options. The demand for SDA will grow and NDIS participants will look for more individualised and contemporary housing. Supply needs to meet this demand; innovative products/models are required.

The NDIA is seeking to encourage innovative models of housing and supports. The NDIA's vision is for an “ordinary life at home” for people with disability, including greater flexibility, independence and “a sense of belonging, safety and security”<sup>23</sup>, while also meeting reasonable and necessary criteria. A well-designed home in the right location can build capacity, enabling more independent living arrangements, increased community participation and social connection.<sup>24</sup>

As stated in the NDIA Home and Living Policy consultation paper:

*For most people an ordinary life does not involve living in a house full of strangers you don't choose, entering aged care before you are elderly, or not feeling confident to look at other supports because you fear it could impact your current ones... But at the moment there are more people moving into group homes than moving out... We don't want that to continue to be the case in 3 years' time. We have heard that there are a lot of people living in large group homes and think [people] could live successfully in more innovative and flexible arrangements.*<sup>25</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Bigby, C., Bould, E., & Beadle-Brown, J. (2018). Comparing Costs and Outcomes of Supported Living with Group Homes in Australia.' *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 43(3), 295-307; Tichá, R., et al., (2012). Correlates of Everyday Choice and Support Related Choice for 8,892 Randomly Sampled Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in 19 States.' *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 50(6), 486-504; and Wehmeyer, M. L., & Bolding, N. (2001). 'Enhanced Self-Determination of Adults with Intellectual Disability as an Outcome of Moving to Community-Based Work or Living Environments.' *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 45(5), 371-383.

<sup>19</sup> Winkler, D., Douglas, J., Oliver, S., D'Cruz, K., Naismith, J., Minter, E., & Liddicoat, S. (2021). Moving into New Housing Designed for People with Disability: Evaluation of Tenant Outcomes (Interim Report). Melbourne, Australia: Summer Foundation. [https://www.summerfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/SDA001\\_Interim\\_report\\_Moving-into-new-housing-design-for-people-with-disability-Evaluation-of-tenant-outcomes.pdf](https://www.summerfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/SDA001_Interim_report_Moving-into-new-housing-design-for-people-with-disability-Evaluation-of-tenant-outcomes.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Marlow, E., & Walker, N. (2016). 'Does Supported Living Work for People with Severe Intellectual Disabilities?' *Advances in Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities* 9(6), 338-351; McConkey, R., Keogh, F., Bunting, B., & Iriarte, E. G. (2018). 'Changes in the Self Rated Well-Being of People who Move from Congregated Settings to Personalized Arrangements and Group Home Placements.' *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 22(1), 49-60; and McConkey, R., Bunting, B., Keogh, F., & Garcia Iriarte, E. (2019). 'The Impact on Social Relationships of Moving from Congregated Settings to Personalized Accommodation.' *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 23(2), 149-159.

<sup>21</sup> Emerson, E., et al. (2001). 'Quality and Costs of Supported Living Residences and Group Homes in the United Kingdom.' *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, 106(5), 401-415.

<sup>22</sup> Oliver, S., Gosden-Kaye, E. Z., Winkler, D., & Douglas, J. M. (2020). 'The Outcomes of Individualised Housing for People with Disability and Complex Needs: A Scoping Review.' *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1-15.

<sup>23</sup> NDIA (2021). 'Consultation Paper: An Ordinary Life at Home.' <https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/3227/download?attachment>

<sup>24</sup> Oliver, S., Gosden-Kaye, E. Z., Winkler, D., & Douglas, J. M. (2020). 'The Outcomes of Individualised Housing for People with Disability and Complex Needs: A Scoping Review.' *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1-15; Wiesel, I., Laragy, C., Gendera, S., Fisher, K., Jenkinson, S., Hill, T., Finch, K., Shaw, W. and Bridge, C. (2015). Moving to my Home: Housing Aspirations, Transitions and Outcomes of People with Disability, AHURI Final Report No. 246, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/246>

<sup>25</sup> NDIA (2021). 'Consultation Paper: An Ordinary Life at Home,' 13. <https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/3227/download?attachment>



## SDA apartments

SDA apartments that are co-located within large mainstream developments have set a new benchmark in how people with disability might be supported to live in the community like everyone else. This contemporary model of disability housing and support is just one of many new models required to meet the diverse needs and preferences of NDIS participants with the highest support needs. The innovative integrated model of co-located SDA apartments has been developed to enable people with high support needs to live in their own apartment either as sole tenant or sharing with a partner or friend. The apartments are co-located in a larger housing development to enable cost effective provision of support. The model is suitable for people with high support needs who:

- Can be safe for a few hours on their own and can reliably let someone know if they need support
- Need access to 24/7 on-call support
- Are suited to living in close proximity to others and have the potential to be a good neighbour with support

This innovative model of housing and support has scaled relatively quickly over the past 5 years. As of June 2021, there were 875 new build apartments in the SDA market, as well as 719 apartments that are as yet unfinished.<sup>26</sup> Together, these apartments will offer places for up to 1855 NDIS participants. The latest edition of the SDA Supply Survey reports that there are 764 single-resident apartments in the development pipeline.<sup>27</sup> All of these SDA apartments are likely to involve tenants sharing on-site support.

## On-site support for tenants of SDA apartments

Support for tenants of SDA apartments is provided as a combination of individual support, through a separate agreement each tenant has with their individual support provider, and on-site support that is available 24/7 by staff located on site and shared by all tenants.

OSS is provided by one support provider for all tenants and is generally provided by a different support provider than provides tenants' individual supports. The tenants' independence is augmented by the use of smart home and communications technology within the apartments. These support arrangements are individualised in comparison with support in group homes or aged care, where all support staff are provided by the same support provider.

The provision of 24/7 on-call on-site shared support is an innovative component that can optimise cost effectiveness for tenants and the NDIS, concurrent with the provision of quality support services and outcomes. Some terminology used to describe OSS to date such as “concierge”, “emergency”, “back-up” or “duress call-outs” has been unhelpful and implies that the on-site support provided is not essential or not used on a daily basis.

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<sup>26</sup> NDIA (2021). 'SDA Enrolled Dwellings and NDIS Demand Data.' Appendix P, Table P. 13, 20.  
<https://data.ndis.gov.au/media/2770/download>

<sup>27</sup> Housing Hub and Summer Foundation. (2021) 'Specialist Disability Accommodation Supply in Australia – November 2021.'  
<https://apo.org.au/node/314855>

In reality, tenants receive a range of flexible support from the OSS provider, including brief periods of planned and ad hoc support – see Table 1 for examples. It is important to note this flexibility is vital to the success of this model as each participant will have individual needs that will change over time. Table 1 summarises specific examples of shared support and 1:1 support identified and mapped to support and cost modelling described by the NDIA's David Cullen in a recent analysis of SDA and support costs in SDA apartments.<sup>28</sup>

**Table 1: Summary of specific examples of shared support and 1:1 support**

Type of support	Examples provided by tenants on on-site shared support and 1:1 planned support
<b>SDA apartments</b>	
	<b>Supports delivered by on-site shared support providers</b>
<b>Scheduled support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Going to bed</li> <li>Taking regular medication</li> <li>Quick meal preparation</li> <li>Repositioning during the day or at night</li> </ul>
<b>Ad hoc support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Going to the toilet</li> <li>Taking irregular medication for asthma, hay fever, pain relief, temporary illness etc</li> <li>Positioning tissue for blowing nose</li> <li>Drink of water or coffee</li> <li>Snack preparation</li> <li>Heat up food</li> <li>Heat up wheat bag, applying</li> <li>Repositioning for pain relief</li> <li>Positioning drink, snack or straw within reach</li> <li>Opening food packaging</li> <li>Getting to work when your 1:1 support for getting out of bed does not show</li> <li>Dropping something you cannot reach (e.g. phone, pen, remote control)</li> <li>Transfer back to bed when unwell or when a rest is needed</li> <li>Providing second worker when tenant has 1:1 supports and 2 people are needed for transfer</li> <li>Put a jacket on or off</li> <li>Assisting with the receipt of larger parcels</li> </ul>
<b>Emergency (non-medical) support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preventing or responding to falling out of chair</li> <li>Preventing or responding to falling out of bed</li> <li>The fire alarm in the building goes off</li> <li>Lifts breaks down – ensuring basic needs are met</li> <li>Illness can quickly become serious without proactive intervention for some tenants</li> </ul>
	<b>Supports delivered by 1:1 planned support providers</b>
<b>Scheduled support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Getting out of bed</li> <li>Showering</li> <li>Getting ready for work</li> <li>Grocery shopping</li> <li>Community based social or leisure</li> <li>Going to work</li> <li>Managing dressings for pressure wounds</li> <li>Cooking meals</li> </ul>

<sup>28</sup> Cullen, D. (2021) Comparative analysis of total SDA and SIL Costs. Presentation to the SDA Roundtable 20th August 2021.

## Funding for on-site shared support

There is tremendous variability between jurisdictions, sites and even tenants within the one apartment complex as to how the NDIS currently funds on-site shared support.

### Supported Independent Living (SIL)

The NDIS defines Supported Independent Living (SIL) as being for people who require 24-hour support. The NDIS provides funding for help or supervision with daily tasks to help people live as independently as possible, while building skills. It includes things like having a person to help with personal care tasks or cooking meals.<sup>29</sup> This is generally the way traditional group homes are funded by the NDIA.

### Concierge

This refers to funding for a support worker on-site 24/7 to be available as and when needed by the tenants, at the tenant's discretion. This support worker is shared by all tenants where the SDA apartments are located. It is funded as a separate 'on-site funding' line item in each of the tenant's plans.

### On-Call Overnight Monitoring (OOM)

This is funded as a support item that provides for overnight on-call assistance with, or supervision of, personal tasks of daily living (either on-site or off-site).<sup>30</sup> It applies to any day of the week and on public holidays. This support item is for an 8-hour period and includes up to 1 hour of active support provided to the participant for the duration of the period.

### Individualised Living Options (ILO)

The NDIA describes an Individualised Living Option (ILO) as an NDIS (funded) package of supports that lets the person choose their home environment and set up supports in the way that best suits them.<sup>31</sup> Although SDA apartments involve the tenant choosing their home environment and supports, ILOs are largely seen by the NDIA as an alternative to SDA, rather than funding for support for people living in SDA.

This work is timely, as the NDIA is currently holding consultations to inform future home and living policies. Alongside these consultations, in recent months the Federal Government has raised concerns that NDIS costs are rising too quickly and scheme sustainability is threatened.<sup>32</sup> SIL payments, which are used to fund the support costs of most (93%) NDIS participants who live in SDA accommodation<sup>33</sup> comprise one of the most significant cost components of the NDIS. Hence the importance of sustainable housing and support models that maximise participant independence outcomes, while reducing the need for paid supports. The NDIA acknowledges that it has "not done enough to encourage new models of home and living,"<sup>34</sup> and welcomes innovation from the market around the provision of housing and supports.

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<sup>29</sup> NDIA (2021). 'Supported Independent Living for participants.'

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/home-and-living/supported-independent-living-participants>

<sup>30</sup> NDIA (2021). 'Pricing arrangements and price limits: 2021-22.' <https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/3518/download?attachment>

<sup>31</sup> NDIA (2021). 'Individualised Living Options.'

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/home-and-living/individualised-living-options>

<sup>32</sup> NDIA (2021). 'Annual Financial Sustainability Report Summary – Interim Update.'

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/3388/download?attachment>

<sup>33</sup> NDIA (2020). 'Improving Outcomes for Participants who Require Supported Independent Living (SIL): Provider and Sector Consultation Paper.' <https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/2666/download?attachment>

<sup>34</sup> NDIA (2021). 'Consultation Paper: An Ordinary Life at Home.' <https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/3227/download?attachment>

Integrated, co-located SDA apartments are an innovative, contemporary model of home and living for people with high support needs. As one of the steps towards further innovation of support provided for tenants of SDA apartments, in 2021 the Summer Foundation conducted co-design research with tenants and support providers. One of the findings showed there is ample scope for the re-design of disability support services provided within the SDA apartments to improve quality and cost effectiveness. The model of co-locating NDIS participants with high support needs in single occupancy dwellings within larger mainstream residential developments is one potential solution to the rising 'SIL bill'.



## 2. What are the features of high quality, cost effective OSS in SDA apartments?

This chapter utilises the evidence provided in the co-design research to summarise the features of high quality, cost effective OSS in SDA apartments, starting with what was identified by the tenants. SDA and OSS providers agreed with features identified by tenants. Providers offered some additional points on cost effectiveness and on what is required for service provision to be sustainable. This chapter also draws on complementary research on quality disability support being undertaken by La Trobe University and the Summer Foundation.

### Features of high quality and cost effective OSS – tenant perspectives

Individualised, person-centred funding schemes like the NDIS aim to empower people with disability by giving them increased discretion over how they spend their NDIS funding, and choice and control in the delivery of their supports. This means that NDIS participants should be able to access high quality support services that align with their needs, preferences and goals. It also means that NDIS participants, as tenants in SDA apartments, are the fundamental informants on features of high quality and cost effective support.

Tenants clearly identified features of good service design and delivery, albeit that the extent to which these were currently in place was reported as variable. Key features were the privacy afforded by living in one's own, private, home with a tenancy agreement, 24/7 flexible support, and more choice and control over space and time than in other settings. These features provide opportunities and indeed requirements for increasing autonomy and independence in home and community.

Having a tenancy agreement for one's own home is very different from being a resident of a shared staffed facility. For example, a tenant has the right to decide who enters their home. The availability of 24/7 flexible support by having a combination of 1:1 and shared support enables support providers to meet a diverse range of needs and preferences. Although tenants might require support unpredictably at any time this may only be required for a few minutes. Examples of important unplanned needs include a tenant needing brief physical assistance with tasks such as toileting, preparing simple meals or snacks and taking medication or repositioning for pain management, as well as the flexibility of being able to get assistance without having to do so within planned support rosters. Tenants described how a combination of 1:1 support and OSS was cost effective for them, with differences across tenants as to how the supports were best combined to get better value from NDIS plans.

Other key features identified by tenants, OSS providers and SDA providers were choice and control of support provision; support staff; communication; adequacy and security of funding; and investment in transition to living more independently. Stakeholders in the co-design workshops identified a range of ways in which support might be set up to deliver a high quality and efficient service.



## **Choice and control of support provision**

- Each person has a choice over when and how they are supported
- The same provider does not deliver the tenant's 1:1 support and shared support
- Tenants are involved in choosing the company providing (1:1 and) shared support and the support workers hired
- Tenants are consulted to inform support worker training
- There is a process for feedback, continuous improvement, and review of the arrangements

## **Support staff**

- Understand tenancy model including rights and privacy e.g. access to private apartments only on invitation (or as agreed between the tenant and service provider)
- OSS providers understand and promote a person-centred culture and staff practices
- Training includes specific requirements of individual tenants
- New staff are introduced to tenants when first employed, before working a shift
- Consistent staff
- OSS support providers understand that the model for delivering support is very different from that of group homes

## **Communication**

Clear, transparent and consistent communication between the NDIS and the tenant and between support providers and the tenant is vital. Communication needs to be timely and ongoing from the start of transition and include:

- Where the funds for OSS sit in the tenant's budget and the process whereby the OSS provider is paid
- What support is available and delivered
- Follow-up on feedback and complaints
- Service coordination communication directly with and through the tenant, so that the tenant is coordinating their 1:1 and OSS support provision. These services operate independently, without having to liaise with each other, as long as the tenant is willing and able to manage the 2 services

## **Adequacy and consistency of funding by the NDIS both initially and into the future**

Unfortunately, this feature is a pain point in the provision of support, security of tenure and management of risk for tenants, SDA providers and support providers.

## **Investment in transition**

There can be a huge learning curve involved for people moving from the family home, aged care, a group home or hospital into an apartment with a tenancy agreement. It is important that the NDIS allows sufficient funding for transition supports e.g. extra physiotherapy or occupational therapy; learning to use the local transport and access shops; learning rights and responsibilities of a tenant. Investment in transition also enables support providers, including the OSS support provider, to get to know the person and develop agreements as to what and how support will be delivered, what training will be needed by staff and to develop communication protocols and agreements.

## Complementary research

While a more detailed exploration of what makes for high quality support services in general is beyond the scope of this paper, the following interrelated themes identified through current research being conducted by La Trobe University and the Summer Foundation are mentioned here for reference.<sup>35 36</sup> The findings are consistent with features identified by tenants of SDA apartments, noting that the tenants identified additional features that are specific to the SDA apartment model.

- Choice and control in managing and being involved in decisions on support
- Individualised support and a person-centred approach to support
- Personal attributes of support workers (e.g. empathy, respect, and attitude)
- Competence of support workers (e.g. training, experience, and practical skills)
- Positive relationship between person with disability and support worker (e.g. trust)
- Accessing consistent support, including continuity of support and funding availability

## Provider perspectives

OSS and SDA providers agreed with the tenants' description of features of the design and delivery of high quality and cost effective shared support. They agreed that fully occupied co-located SDA apartments are more cost effective for some NDIS participants.

It is important to note that all tenants on one site with co-located SDA apartments may not have similar disabilities, similar levels of complexity or levels of support requirements. Each SDA apartment site has a mix of tenants who, because of their goals, support needs and preferences, are able to share support in an OSS model. This is not currently well understood by service providers or the NDIA.

OSS providers participating in the research, provided costing information based on staff ratios and rosters that complements the Stochastic modelling by David Cullen.<sup>37</sup> OSS and SDA providers made additional points for the sustainable delivery of high quality and cost-effective services. These are discussed below in Chapter 3.

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<sup>35</sup> Topping, M., Douglas, J., & Winkler, D. (2020). Factors that influence the Quality of Paid Support for Adults with Acquired Neurological Disability: Scoping Review and Thematic Synthesis. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1-19.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2020.1830190>

<sup>36</sup> Topping, M., Douglas, J., & Winkler, D. (2021). Factors that influence the Quality of Paid Support for Adults with Acquired Neurological Disability: Scoping Review and Preliminary Interview Findings. Paper presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> Pacific Rim Conference of the International Neuropsychological Society, Australasian Society for the Study of Brain Impairment, and Australian Psychological Society's College of Clinical Neuropsychologists.  
<https://www.summerfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Factors-that-influence-the-quality-of-paid-disability-support-for-adults-with-acquired-neurological-disability-Scoping-review-and-preliminary-interview-findings-.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Chief Economist, NDIA.

### 3. What do OSS providers need from the NDIA in order to deliver high quality and cost effective support?

The co-design research included exploration of what was working well and what was not working well in the delivery of OSS from the perspective of tenants, SDA providers and OSS providers. Much of what was not working well was influenced directly or indirectly by NDIA practices.

When asked what was not working well, OSS providers emphasised inadequacy and insecurity of NDIS funding, overly lengthy and uncoordinated NDIS processes, lack of clarity on risks and responsibilities for tenants and providers and poor NDIS communication.

#### Box 1

Despite the complexity of pioneering a new way of supporting people with complex and high needs to live in their own apartments, OSS providers were highly motivated by the outcomes they were seeing for tenants, as illustrated by this quote:

We're having some really, really positive life experiences for people who have come out of aged care, have come out of hospitals, who have come out of living in homes that just weren't suitable. We're having some really, really positive life experiences for people in a short period of time so I just think it's really important that that message gets sold as well, like that we're not just here saying that the model doesn't work, that the funding doesn't work. It does. It's fantastic. It just needs some guarantees for providers, particularly on-site providers, to be able to know that they can operate in a market model that's going to be cost effective and be able to at least break even. *(OSS provider participant in co-design research)*

When asked in the co-design research what they need from the NDIA, the OSS provider response was summarised as:

- A stable operating environment with a funding framework for providing shared on-site support that is clear and consistent
- Adequate and reliable funding for the level of service needed to provide a quality service, manage risks, and fulfil obligations

More specifically, as mentioned in the previous chapter, OSS providers, SDA providers and tenants agreed that the following was needed from the NDIA:

- Adequacy and security of funding by the NDIS, both initially and into the future
- Investment in transition of each tenant from their previous residence and lifestyle into their SDA apartment



OSS providers (and SDA providers) added that the following were needed:

1. Coordination of NDIS and other processes to enable all tenants of a new SDA apartment development to receive approvals and transition to take up their tenancies at approximately the same date
2. The time taken for NDIS processes was a significant pain point impacting on vacancy management and hence model sustainability. Streamlined and coordinated processes are also necessary for planning and funding approvals to enable tenants to be involved in selection of the OSS provider and support staff
3. Clarity of risks and responsibilities for the tenant, OSS provider, and SDA provider
4. NDIS planners and support coordinators to be well informed on the SDA apartment model and promote this with prospective tenants
5. NDIS planners and support coordinators to be skilled in understanding the individual requirements of prospective tenants and how these translate into funding
6. Ongoing, two-way communication between representatives of the NDIA, SDA providers, support providers and tenants regarding development of the SDA apartment model. This form of communication would be in addition to design and delivery of the services to individual tenants
7. Timely funding for home and other essential assistive technology for tenants

## How might this happen?

Based on the evidence provided by the SDA apartments co-design report,<sup>38</sup> 3 actions are urgently needed:

1. Policy commitment by the NDIA to make the best use of existing SDA apartments and those under construction
2. Development and implementation of a framework for the design, delivery and funding of support in co-located single occupancy dwellings
3. Development and implementation of a framework to monitor, review and evaluate in co-located single occupancy dwellings

### 1. Policy commitment by the NDIA to make the best use of existing SDA apartments and those under construction

SDA funded apartments work well when the NDIA works with SDA and OSS providers to fund and enable contemporary models of housing and support and innovation.

Although the innovation of SDA apartments has scaled relatively quickly over the past 5 years, the demand for this configuration of housing and support has not yet been fully established. A policy commitment to making the best possible use of the existing SDA apartment stock would authorise and underpin different NDIA processes. This might include NDIS staff training from SDA tenants on how this type of SDA and support is different from a group home, activation of demand, in addition to the current individually focused processes.

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<sup>38</sup> Winkler, Di; Finis, Carolyn; D'Cruz, Kate; Mulherin, Peter; de Costa, Monique; Rathbone, Alecia; Condi, Amelia; Douglas, Jacinta. *Support in Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Apartments* (2022). Melbourne, Australia: Summer Foundation.

The current NDIA processes focus on individuals securing funding for SDA and the support needed to live in an SDA dwelling including shared support. This focus is appropriately consistent with the NDIS as an individualised scheme aiming to empower people with disability with choice and control of their services; however, it assumes that the services are available. Individually focused processes are a cornerstone for choice and control. But, while crucially important, individually focused processes are not enough in the current state of the NDIS market where the products and services market is still being established. Individualised funding can stifle the capacity of NDIS participants to come together to share support and get better value for money. Other, complementary processes are needed to support innovation and market development.

In addition, although there is an understandable concern that if support services are shared, this could reduce NDIS participants' choice and control, there is an inbuilt tension between the idea of all support delivery being required to be on an individual basis and the need for cost efficiency. Both NDIS participants and the NDIS can obtain better value from the individual's funding plan if, under certain circumstances, and with safeguards, people can share supports. As demonstrated by the participants' input to the 2021 co-design research, OSS in SDA apartments represents one such opportunity.

## **2. Framework for the design, funding and delivery of support in co-located single occupancy dwellings**

The SDA market will work well with clear and consistent information and application of policy regarding eligibility and timely processes for approval of SDA and support in NDIS plans. Features of high quality and cost effective support have been identified in the co-design research. A framework for funding support is urgently needed and would include and/or inform decision-making and other processes such as eligibility, funding, payments, administration and communication.

Such a framework should include how the NDIA could fund support in SDA dwellings in a way that sets up the drivers for high quality and cost effective services, provides tenants with choice and control over service delivery, and is optimally cost effective. While the projects to date have been apartments there is no reason why a similar model of support would not work in lower density housing i.e. co-located single occupancy villas, townhouses or houses.

Tenants, providers and the NDIA need to work together to develop, and consistently implement, a national framework for making timely decisions about funding shared support and 1:1 supports to maximise cost efficiencies and tenant outcomes. This is also needed to provide some certainty and clarity to both tenants and providers about the relative benefits and compromises between shared and individual service delivery. The framework needs to be broad enough to enable tailoring the model of shared support to meet the needs of the broad range of tenants living in co-located SDA funded dwellings and accommodate the changing needs of tenants over time. It is anticipated that some tenants will become more independent in an appropriately built environment. Other tenants have degenerative conditions and will need more intensive support over time.

There is a wide range of people with disability whose support in co-located SDA dwellings would be cost effective. Unlike more traditional models of disability housing that tend to provide a uniform service to residents, co-located SDA dwellings have the capacity to tailor a combination of shared and 1:1 support to meet the needs of a diverse range of NDIS participants. The combination of OSS and 1:1 support enables support to be tailored to support a range of NDIS participants who need access to 24/7 support. For example, co-located dwellings can be cost effective for people who need 24/7 1:1 support and some 2:1 support for short periods during the day (e.g. people who are ventilator dependent. The framework would support this diversity and tailoring support to meet the needs of a specific group of tenants without being prescriptive about the exact shared support and 1:1 support provided at each site).

A clearer framework would provide a more stable operating environment for SDA providers and OSS providers so they can focus on delivering higher quality services and cost effective support to tenants, in the long term.

The framework would identify and support excellent NDIA policy, processes, decision-making, funding, payments, administration and communication for SDA tenants and providers in co-located SDA dwellings. It should not however be so prescriptive that it stifles innovation and the development of different service offerings to meet the needs and preferences of a diverse range of NDIS tenants.

The following should be addressed in the framework, informed by the specific points identified in the co-design research:

- Focus on good outcomes for tenants
- Ongoing transparency and consistency of terminology and communication
- Simple, timely and transparent NDIA approval processes
- Adequate and secure funding

### **Focus on good outcomes for tenants**

The SDA market works well when stakeholders are able to collaborate with the NDIA and together focus on delivering good outcomes for tenants.

### **Ongoing transparency and consistency of terminology and communication**

This framework needs to be clearly communicated to all stakeholders including tenants, close others, support coordinators, support providers, SDA providers and NDIA staff nationally. Information needs to be provided to potential and current tenants, such as eligibility requirements and how the different components of living in co-located SDA dwellings are funded (e.g. SDA, shared support, 1:1 support, assistive technology, and bespoke modifications) so that potential tenants know what to ask for in their NDIS planning meetings.

### **Simple, timely and transparent NDIA approval processes**

For the past 2 years the NDIA has been talking about streamlining the process of approving SDA, support, assistive technology and home modifications to enable the timely transition of NDIS participants into new SDA. It is time to operationalise this promise, monitor the performance of this team and publish performance data. The end-to-end process from the submission of all documentation to making the outcome known to the NDIS participant needs to be documented, transparent and monitored. The market needs to see regular data reports for continuous improvements of the performance of these systems such as data on service level agreement performance and tenant outcomes.

Tenants of co-located SDA funded dwellings in new housing developments must be approved efficiently by the NDIS so they can all be involved in selecting the OSS provider and staff (perhaps with the assistance of an independent third party). This would also enable better planning for transition and support services, and reduce stress on tenants and providers. Efficient NDIS approval processes would be more cost effective for both the NDIA and providers. It would also address the increasing unsustainability of maintaining vacancies for extended periods of time.

### **Adequate and secure funding**

Sufficient funding is essential for skilled support coordination, transition, assistive technology, quality support, security of housing and support and provision for management of risks to the tenant and providers.

The SDA market works well when there is adequate funding for specialist support coordination to build the capacity of NDIS participants to make an informed decision about housing and support and navigate the process of getting adequate funding in their NDIS plans. Given the lack of information for potential tenants, the amount of capacity building required and the arduous process for getting funding in NDIS plans, more funding and capacity building for support coordinators is urgently needed to support potential tenants through this process. Tenants need timely access to adequate funding for housing, direct supports, home modifications and assistive technology that maximises independence in the home and the local community.

### **3. Framework for review and evaluation of support in co-located SDA**

OSS providers were adamant that SDA apartments have the potential to be a flagship for the NDIA in choice and control. A data driven approach has significant potential to demonstrate that this model is both good value for money and supports people with the highest levels of disability to live an ordinary life.

The purpose of SDA payments is to fund housing that increases independence for NDIS participants with the highest support needs and/or enables the efficient delivery of disability support.<sup>39</sup> Both tenants and providers were able to articulate the evidence base needed to enable the NDIA to make responsible and informed decisions regarding funding for housing and support for potential tenants in SDA apartments.

A rigorous evidence base is needed to show how shared support in SDA apartments can be high quality, cost effective and achieve good outcomes for tenants. Ideally a framework for review and evaluation would include:

- Value for money
- Tenant outcomes
- Evidence base to guide eligibility criteria
- Data driven continuous improvement
- Regular communication

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<sup>39</sup> Australian Government (2020). *National Disability Insurance Scheme (Specialist Disability Accommodation) Rules 2020 (Cth)*. <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2020L00769>

**Value for money**

An evidence base regarding the current and future value for money provided to the NDIA by co-located apartments compared with other new SDA dwelling types e.g. 3 bedroom villas, 2-3 bedroom houses and 4-5 bedroom group homes.

**Tenant outcomes**

An evidence base regarding the outcomes and economic impact of tenants living in a range of contemporary and new SDA including apartments. This would draw on contemporary research and include outcomes related to subjective lived experience, quality of life, health, wellbeing, community participation, autonomy, satisfaction and number and cost of support hours.

**Evidence base to guide eligibility criteria**

Based on the data regarding support costs and outcomes, describe the characteristics and specific support needs of NDIS participants that are best suited to living in co-located apartments. Refine and review this as more data and evidence becomes available about support costs and tenant outcomes in different types of new SDA. Information about eligibility criteria needs to be published so that the market can respond.

**Data driven continuous improvement**

Continuous improvement auditing of market development processes and of the development and implementation of the proposed framework for design, delivery and funding support in SDA apartments.

This would be separate from and complement regular compliance auditing and would include collecting data on NDIA processes and performance. For example:

- What data or questions might OSS providers and tenants use to measure the performance of the NDIS in the set-up and operation of co-located SDA apartments?
- How might the SDA sector routinely collect data to monitor the performance of the NDIS?

**Regular communication**

Regular communication forums between stakeholders including the NDIA to share and review data to continually learn and improve the utility of the data gathered and its analysis.

## 4. Conclusion

The NDIA Home and Living policy discussion paper states that the NDIA's vision is for an "ordinary life at home" for people with disability, including greater flexibility, independence and "a sense of belonging, safety and security."<sup>40</sup> Living in an SDA apartment with individualised and on-site shared support is entirely consistent with this vision, and indeed offers a practical and innovative home and living option for people with high support needs while representing value for money.

The current NDIA Home and Living consultation process provides an opportunity to promote this option before the NDIA Home and Living policy discussion paper is finalised. Drawing on evidence from co-design workshops and interviews conducted in 2021 by the Summer Foundation, in association with La Trobe University,<sup>41</sup> this paper has described what on-site support providers need from the NDIA to deliver high quality and cost effective support in co-located SDA apartments.

Participants in the research were in agreement on the features of high quality and cost effective support. Service providers identified several additional points relevant to sustaining this service delivery. What is needed was clearly described and most suggestions require engagement from the NDIA.

Three potential solutions emerged from the co-design workshops:

1. Policy commitment by the NDIA to making the best use of vacant SDA apartments and new apartments under construction
2. Framework for design, delivery and funding support in single occupancy co-located SDA dwellings, developed by representatives of the NDIA, tenants and providers
3. Framework for review and evaluation of support in co-located SDA

None of these potential solutions are simple; all ultimately require engagement from representatives of all stakeholder groups including tenants, OSS providers, SDA providers and the NDIA.

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<sup>40</sup> NDIA (2021). 'Consultation Paper: An Ordinary Life at Home.' <https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/3227/download?attachment>

<sup>41</sup> Winkler, D., Finis, C., D'Cruz, K., Mulherin, P., de Costa, M., Rathbone, A., Condi, A., Douglas, J. (2022). Support in Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) apartments: Findings from co-design workshops and interviews with tenants and providers. <https://apo.org.au/node/316938>