FROM HOUSE TO HOME

Key insights and recommendations on Specialist Disability Accommodation in Victoria

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The Consumer Policy Research Centre (CPRC) is an independent, not-for-profit research organisation. We conduct research into the issues affecting Australians and translate our findings into practical policy recommendations that help create fairer markets and improve people's lives.

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Statement of Recognition

CPRC acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters throughout Australia. We pay our respect to Elders, past, present and emerging, acknowledging their continuing relationship to land and the ongoing living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples across Australia.

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Introduction

The Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) market provides critical housing for people with disability with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs.[1]

SDA was established in 2016, when the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) formally introduced SDA as a funded support category at the national level. Recent NDIS data shows 3.3% of all NDIS participants across Australia are either eligible for SDA or are actively using SDA. In Victoria, this figure is 3.5%.[2]

In Victorian legislation, a SDA home is an enrolled SDA dwelling with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), or a permanent dwelling where accommodation and funded daily independent living support is provided to one or more people living with a disability.[3]

Homes that fit within this definition that are not funded as SDA through the NDIA are known as Supported Independent Living (SIL) homes, or 'SIL homes'. Since 1 July 2026, SIL home providers are required to be registered through the NDIS Commission.[4]

In 2025, Consumer Affairs Victoria commissioned Consumer Policy Research Centre (CPRC) to undertake research to understand the lived experience in SDA in Victoria. The research involved speaking with people living in SDA, family members who care for people living in SDA and other group disability housing known as 'SIL homes', and people operating in and working in the SDA sector in Victoria. A Lived Experience Advisory Group also guided the research and shared insights on life in SDA.

The research sought to understand what is working well in SDA in Victoria, what challenges exist, and how SDA design, services, regulation and policy can be improved to support the livelihood and wellbeing of people who live in SDA.

Given access to SDA homes involves interactions with both state and federal governments, this report provides recommendations for CAV and the Victorian Government, as well as for the Federal Government.

This snapshot report provides a synopsis of the key findings and recommendations from the research.

The following report provides a deep dive into the research for further information:

Life in Specialist Disability Accommodation in Victoria Report →

CPRC conducted a concurrent research project looking into SDA in Western Australia (WA) which was funded by the WA Government. Comparative insights between WA and Victoria are provided throughout the *Life in Specialist Disability Accommodation in Victoria* report where a notable difference exists.

Life in Specialist Disability Accommodation in Western Australia Report →

As recommendations were developed with the Advisory Group from each jurisdiction, the recommendations including those directed towards the Federal Government and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission differ accordingly.

The journey into and through SDA

1. Finding a home	2. Moving in	3. Living in SDA
Funding applications are complex, lengthy and admin-heavy. SDA outcomes were less determined by need alone and largely shaped by an individual's ability to access information and receive practical support and advocacy.	Residents and family members need more support and accessible information to better understand their rights and responsibilities. Many were unsure about the type of lease agreement in place and believed they were entitled to live in their home forever.	Residents were highly satisfied with their homes, but modifications and maintenance delays remain. Residents living in shared accommodation did not always have meaningful choice and control. Some providers did not have a clear policy or process for handling complaints.

Finding a SDA home

For most residents and family members, the journey into SDA was defined by complexity rather than clarity

- Residents and family members described unique pathways to find and move into SDA.
- The funding application process was widely perceived as complex, lengthy and stressful, requiring residents and family members to navigate large volumes of information.
- Strict eligibility criteria often required multiple professional assessments and supporting documents from a range of professionals, making the process particularly time-intensive and admin-heavy.
- SDA outcomes were less determined by need alone and more likely to be influenced by an individual's ability to access information and receive advocacy and practical support throughout the application process.

> **"It's not a joke. I can spend like three hours on hold to the NDIS trying to solve something, it's just a waste of resources. We're a small business... it's very tricky. They keep saying they're changing things... at the moment it's just seemingly either under-resourced or they're just not wanting to spend any money on these (NDIS) plans, I don't know."**
>
> – SDA PROVIDER

Expert guidance helps people navigate complexity

- Navigating SDA funding often requires significant expertise, meaning people with close access to support coordinators and professional care teams were often able to secure funding and move into SDA more effectively than people who relied on self-directed research and advocacy or intermittent contact with NDIS case managers.

> **"Sometimes the questions would overlap, and you go, 'I've just finished explaining my disability and explaining why I need SDA, but now you're asking me to answer it again?'"**
>
> – SDA RESIDENT

> **"We had to ask for a lot of help, so if it wasn't for the support coordinator, it's just overwhelming."**
>
> – FAMILY MEMBER, SDA

Some residents moved into the first SDA offered, while others took time to weigh up the options available

- As many residents and family members of people with disability started their journey into SDA or other SIL housing from a position of urgency, securing 'good enough' accommodation sometimes took priority over finding a home that ticked all the boxes.
- Residents and family members who were not under immediate pressure to secure housing were more likely to explore multiple SDA options and prioritised finding a home that aligned with their long-term needs, preferences and goals rather than accepting the first available vacancy.
- Residents' ideal home prioritised independence, proximity to family or their existing community, a safe and accessible living space, and the quality of support services.

> "I went to some information sessions. I went and had a look at a couple of apartments just to get an idea and...to get a feel about what they were like. I also did some practice at staying away with a support worker in an apartment that would be similar... to get a feel about what it might be like..."
>
> – SDA RESIDENT

> "The amenity, or the location, or that sort of thing, ease of access to, public transport, shops, and some semblance of community, and yeah, that was important for us as well, for her, just not feeling isolated."
>
> – FAMILY MEMBER, SDA

> "I've got lots of storage in my apartment. It's not the perfect setup necessarily, but compared to a lot of places I've seen, it's so much more storage."
>
> – SDA RESIDENT

Even after securing housing, some residents continue to navigate funding gaps or cuts to their SIL supports, which directly impacts their wellbeing and ability to live safely in their home

- Family members and residents must continue to demonstrate a level of need during plan reassessments. This can cause stress and concern, particularly where there had been no change in impairment or where support needs were increasing.
- Recent media coverage of proposed changes to the NDIS further heightened concerns that funding could be reduced or cut unexpectedly.
- Family members routinely filled gaps in SIL support funding.
- Most industry members believed residents were not adequately funded to fully support their needs, with multiple citing resident funding gaps as their biggest challenge. Further, industry members did not consistently have visibility of a resident's SDA funding.

> "The NDIS have cut my support worker hours, so that's not necessarily from an SDA point of view, but I think it's relevant in that they make assumptions that if they give you accessible housing that it will fix all your other issues. I still need support and those hours have been cut."
>
> – SDA RESIDENT

Transitioning into a SDA home

Understanding resident needs and preferences at point of entry into SDA is critical, particularly when they are moving into shared accommodation

- According to industry members, understanding resident needs is a critical aspect of the application process. Several providers referenced detailed processes undertaken to assess resident preferences, goals and support needs, including for resident matching.
- One resident explained that details a provider may overlook, such as an apartment's floor level or layout, can have a significant impact on whether a home is accessible.
- Resident matching was described as the biggest challenge in the frontline worker's role.

Understanding of lease agreements was inconsistent, with some residents and family members unsure about the type of agreement in place and the rights it provides

- Residents and family members had mixed levels of confidence and understanding of the type of lease agreement that was in place.
- Not one resident or family member identified their agreement as an SDA residency agreement.
- Many residents and family members believed they were entitled to live in their home forever, while at the same time being on a shorter fixed-term lease.
- Providers offered mixed levels of support to residents and family members in helping them understand their agreement.

> "Everybody can have vacancies and they can do all the advertising in the world… but you can't just put anybody with anybody… I would definitely say participant matching is the hardest part in that the SIL/ SDA space, because if it's not right, it's a disaster."
>
> – SDA FRONTLINE WORKER

> "I think like a lot of other people I would say I was so desperate to move into accessible and suitable housing that I would almost kind of sign anything when I moved in… I was given information when I moved in which I did read and stuff like that."
>
> – SDA RESIDENT

> "I wasn't even clear on how the service provider looked at his accommodation. It wasn't… a residential tenancy agreement because it didn't state that. It kind of seemed like it was more like a rooming house. They were framing it off a rooming house situation, which was… really unclear."
>
> – FAMILY MEMBER, SIL

Residents and family members seek greater support and accessible information to better understand their rights and responsibilities

- Residents and family members reported mixed levels of confidence in their understanding of their rights and responsibilities.
- Several expressed a desire for a cheat sheet or care book that could outline what their entitlements are, what their provider is responsible for, and who to contact for advice or support on these matters.
- Aside from the NDIS or the support coordinator, there was uncertainty around where to go to for further information on rights and responsibilities.

> **"...I think maybe, like, a care book, or, you know, some paperwork saying, 'look, if you need some assistance for this area, or this area, there's a number, there's an email.' I think you definitely need some type of information provided at the start."**
>
> – FAMILY MEMBER, SDA FUNDING PENDING

Living in a SDA home

Residents reported high levels of satisfaction with their homes

- Residents valued features that supported independence, comfort and community connection including accessible design, outdoor space, storage, opportunities for personalisation, and a balance of privacy and social interaction.
- Level of satisfaction was consistent among both residents who accepted the first SDA offered and those who spent more time exploring options.

> "I've got it (my ideal home). I didn't think I would have it, but I do. I love my apartment because I've got beautiful views to look at…it's got everything I need for my accessibility needs."
>
> – SDA RESIDENT

A one-size-fits-all approach does not always meet residents' needs – modifications are a necessary and ongoing part of the SDA experience

- Many residents and family members identified additional modifications that were still required to improve the Liveability of their home.
- Half of the residents we spoke to highlighted accessibility limitations relating to space, layout and automation that affected the functionality of their home.
- One resident shared that their provider went above and beyond to support them with modifications, while others were left waiting.
- Most providers reported that it was not their responsibility to supply, fund or maintain assistive technology, yet it was acknowledged that it can be a critical inclusion to ensure the home is safe and accessible for the resident.

> "The organisation that I'm in, they're very good at letting you personalise the apartment."
>
> – SDA RESIDENT

> "Not all disabilities are the same, and they (the providers) don't understand that. They think because it fits for one person, it fits for another, in the same circumstance. And that's where we're kind of struggling with actually finding a place, because they just want to give you one, pop them in there, and then say, done deal… but it doesn't work."
>
> – FAMILY MEMBER, SDA FUNDING PENDING

> "In terms of my actual apartment… I can't open and close doors so… they don't have sliding doors for certain things so…that does make it a little bit difficult…and I still get stuck in certain areas because it is a bit tight and…they do have a height adjustable kitchen bench which I really appreciate but it's not automated so I still can't control it."
>
> – SDA RESIDENT

Responsive maintenance is essential to ensuring homes remain safe and fit-for-purpose

- All residents reported confidence in knowing who to contact to make a maintenance request.
- Residents and family members experienced mixed maintenance outcomes, with some encountering significant delays and dismissive responses from housing providers, which directly impacted their safety.
- Most industry members reported formal mechanisms for handling maintenance issues, indicating that they had a clear process and timeframes.
- Maintenance processes and outcomes were notably worse for family members of residents in SIL homes.

> **"I've sent emails and there just hasn't been any response and sometimes it's a little unclear as to who does what and where and why and who… I'm not a big fan of phone calls, but I do find if you call up sometimes that is easier."**
>
> – SDA RESIDENT

Lack of clarity around complaints processes and escalation pathways means that residents and family members are less comfortable raising an issue

- When discussing complaint escalation pathways beyond their initial contact with the housing or SIL provider, many residents and family members were unsure on who to approach next within the organisation.
- When complaints are not acknowledged, acted upon or resolved in a timely manner, residents can lose confidence in provider responses and be less willing to raise concerns in the future.
- Confidence in complaint processes and outcomes were somewhat lower for family members of residents in SIL homes. For these family members, rapport with the SIL housing provider made the difference between having a complaint resolved or being issued a notice to vacate.
- Several providers stated that they do not have a clear policy or process for complaint handling.

> **"So their response is always, 'okay, we'll come and see you and talk about the problem' and a manager will come and see me, and we'll talk about it and they're all very nice and then they go away and nothing happens."**
>
> – SDA RESIDENT

SDA and SIL operations

Residents face some risk when SDA and SIL service delivery is tied

- When a resident has an issue with their housing or support services, they are at higher risk of both services being compromised when these services are tied together and supplied by the same provider.
- All but one of the SDA providers interviewed (three out of four) indicated that support services, including SIL, were provided independently from their organisation.

> **"I think SIL (supports) should be separated… because the power imbalance is really unfair and it doesn't give anybody choice and control."**
>
> – FAMILY MEMBER, SIL

Residents in shared accommodation did not always have meaningful choice and control in choosing their SIL provider

- Some residents in shared accommodation were required to share the same SIL provider as their housemates, limiting their ability to use their own support team and exercise choice and control.

Providers had inconsistent understanding of their legal obligations, creating variation in how rights and protections are applied in practice

- Among providers who perceived that SDA laws and regulations were unclear, this was due to constant regulatory changes, alongside inconsistent advice provided by CAV.
- It was observed that there are inconsistencies across state and federal regulations.
- There were concerns that the disability housing sector had not kept pace with recent legislative changes to Part 12A of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* that amends the definition of SDA to include SIL homes.

Residents may leave SDA for a range of reasons

- Most residents and family members had not experienced an exit process from SDA.
- Providers explained that residents may move to be closer to family or to live in more desirable locations.
- Providers reported that when a notice to vacate is issued, it is commonly due to the residents' behaviour.

> **"…It's almost like a second wave. People that moved into SDA in the early days moved into locations that were available, which often took them outside of their communities or away from their families, and now there's the opportunity for them to move back closer to family…"**
>
> – SDA PROVIDER

Recommendations for CAV and the Victorian Government

1. Provide accessible information and support regarding residents' tenancy rights

Many residents and their family members were uncertain about their rights and who or where to go for help or advice.

While we shouldn't expect residents and their families to have complete knowledge of SDA laws, regulations and consumer protections, residents and their families need clear and accessible information on how to get help and the type of help they can expect to receive.

All information must be accessible to be meaningfully of use to the disability community.

Many residents' experiences were also highly dependent on their formal support networks, such as their NDIS support coordinator. Accessible information and support regarding tenancy rights will also benefit these supports who are not experts in tenancy rights.

SDA residents and their families also need access to specialist independent legal and advocacy support to understand and exercise their tenancy rights, resolve housing-related issues, and make informed decisions about their accommodation.

Recommendation 1A. Make materials and resources for residents and their family members on their rights more accessible

a. **Co-design resources and guidance for SDA residents with people living with disability and work with accessibility experts.**

b. **Specific resources that should be updated, redesigned, or created:**

- A standalone resource on the CAV website to make information easy to find and navigate.
- The SDA information statement specifically, which is currently too text heavy and lacks clear pathways for assistance in its current form.
- Clear guidance to inform people of their rights regarding Notices to Vacate and Notices of Temporary Relocation.
- Information on SDA provider duties including urgent and non-urgent repair timeframes, as outlined in the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997.*

c. **Test drafts of these** materials with the disability community, ensuring a wide range of people with different types of disabilities are represented.

d. When co-designing and testing new content and formats with the disability community, including community and advocacy organisations, remunerate people for their time and advice.

e. **Promote resources to the disability community.**

Recommendation 1B. Provide accessible information on how residents and family members can escalate a problem

Many residents and family members were uncertain about how to escalate an issue once living in SDA.

There should be a 'no wrong door' approach for residents and their family members wanting to report an issue or seek help.

- **Outline the process a resident or their family member can go through when escalating a complaint, clearly outlining what to do when an issue is not able to be resolved directly with the provider.** This should include a clear pathway to Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria (RDRV) and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) at the end of the dispute resolution journey.
- In line with Recommendation 2 (Take tangible action to improve co-regulation of SDA), **establish a formal pathway of referrals between CAV and the NDIS.**

Recommendation 1C. Fund independent legal advice, support and advocacy services assisting people in disability housing

The complex intersection of SDA, tenancy law, disability rights and the NDIS requires specialist expertise that is often unavailable in mainstream legal and advocacy services, which are already operating at capacity.

Funding should support a specialist SDA legal and advocacy service that can provide direct assistance to participants while also building sector capability through training, secondary consultations and ongoing support for tenancy advocates, disability advocates and community legal services.

Funding could be provided to an existing organisation that is well set up to perform this role. This would strengthen access to expert advice, improve the resolution of tenancy issues and disputes, and help ensure the rights of people living in SDA are consistently protected.

Recommendation 1D. Invest further in CAV training for frontline staff taking calls from SDA residents and their families

CAV need to be contactable for people seeking advice and assistance from the regulator.

- **Work with the disability community to identify how CAV can best support them and what contact access options they need.**
- **If not already well established, invest in SDA-specific training for CAV staff answering calls on SDA tenancy matters.**

2. Take tangible action to improve co-regulation of SDA

SDA in Victoria is regulated by CAV alongside the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. There are many areas in which CAV and the NDIS's roles are blurred, such as the enforcement of maintenance and complaints processes. For example, while the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission regulates internal complaint and emergency management processes amid other functions, CAV has a responsibility to regulate provider maintenance obligations relating to a SDA property.

A strong regulatory response relies on coordination and communication between CAV and the federal regulator of SDA.

Recommendation 2A.
If not already well-established, set up a mechanism to share intelligence between CAV and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to identify systemic issues and inform enforcement action

It is important that CAV and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission share intelligence with one another to identify systemic problems relating to SDA and coordinate regulatory responses.

CAV and the NDIS need to appropriately refer breaches to one another, as a breach relating directly to the federal regulator may also be a breach of contract regulated through the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*.

By way of example, insights from industry members suggest that not all SDA providers have a policy or clear process for complaint handling as required under federal regulation and the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*. CAV needs to be able to refer this issue to the NDIS to address, while also issuing advice for compliance with the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* and/or take any other enforcement action directly with the SDA provider.

Recommendation 2B.
Require SDA providers to give residents and family members contact details for requesting repair, maintenance and complaint processes

A recurring challenge was uncertainty about responsibilities and accountability once living in SDA, including how to report a problem or make a complaint and who to contact. Processes to get something fixed can be slow.

Residents and their family members do not always have confidence in who is responsible and who to contact when they require maintenance or modification to their home, when something breaks down, or when making a complaint.

Section 498J (Content of SDA residency agreement) of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* prescribes matters that must be specified in a standard form SDA agreement. While the process for requesting repairs or maintenance to the SDA dwelling and the process for making complaints are required, there is currently no specified requirement to include the details of who to contact as part of these processes.

Noting that including the contact details of the relevant person in the SDA residency contract may not be appropriate due to turnover of staff, CAV should identify how best to include this information.

This should be implemented by both CAV and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission for complaint and maintenance processes for their respective regulatory domains.

Recommendation 2C.
Clarify regulatory responsibilities relating to arrangements such as SIL homes

While there are clear standards governing SDA providers and dwellings, responsibility for regulation of SIL home providers and dwellings is not always clear.

Recent legislative change at the federal level has meant SIL providers are required to be registered with the NDIS. The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission has also recently introduced updated SIL Practice Standards to include standards regarding agreements about tenancy, house and support arrangements.[5]

Given the cross-over in regulation, this is a good opportunity for CAV and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to clarify co-regulation of the SIL home sector, including which homes are run by providers registered with the NDIS in Victoria which will assist with targeted outreach.

Who regulates SDA in Victoria

Consumer Affairs Victoria	Blurred roles	NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

3. Conduct targeted outreach with SDA providers, with a particular focus on arrangements such as SIL homes

Providers of SDA homes are required to supply residents with a SDA residency agreement which provides increased tenancy protections, or a standard residential tenancy agreement. Legislative change in mid-2019 brought SDA residency agreements into the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*.[6]

Insights suggest there are a considerable number of disability housing providers who are not across recent legislative changes to Part 12A of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* that amends the definition of SDA to include arrangements like SIL homes.

Among providers who felt that SDA laws and regulations were unclear, this was attributed to constant changes being made alongside inconsistent advice from CAV, and confusing language in the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* regarding the definition of an SDA dwelling.

Recommendation 3A. Promote use of the SDA residency agreement among non-enrolled SDA providers

Insights from the Advisory Group suggest it is highly unusual to see non-enrolled providers (usually SIL home providers) offering the SDA agreement to residents, as they are required to.

This suggests further targeted outreach with non-enrolled SDA providers could increase the use of SDA agreements with stronger tenancy protections for residents. Some providers are confused about which tenancy agreement they can use. More effective communications from CAV would assist industry members in their operational transition.

Recommendation 3B. Provide guidance to educate SDA providers on their obligations to pay for fixtures and damages

SDA provider responsibilities are not always clear to both providers and residents/family members with respect to responsibility to supply assistive technology to meet resident needs when not funded in their NDIS plan.

Section 498M of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* (Duties of SDA provider) states a duty of the provider to "install fixtures required by the SDA resident to assist their daily living or proper use and enjoyment of the SDA dwelling".

Defining 'fixture' would assist in clarifying these obligations in guidance to providers. The definition should take into account advancements in technology that can help make a significant difference to a resident's daily living and wellbeing. Issuing this same information in an accessible resource for residents so they are aware of this obligation would also assist.

Similarly, Section 498N of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* (Duties of SDA resident) requires SDA providers to pay for the cost of repair to damage, if the behaviour resulting in the damage was because of the person's disability.

This can include for example damage to walls and doors caused by a wheelchair. Insights from providers suggests some may pass on the cost to residents when they may in fact be liable to cover this cost themselves.

SDA providers need to be aware of their responsibility to pay for damages in this instance. Guidance should make this obligation clear.

4. Take a proactive enforcement approach in regulating SDA provider obligations

CAV should take a role in early intervention by enforcing provider obligations proactively, before something goes seriously wrong. Further, based on publicly available information, there appears to be a lack of clarity on CAV's enforcement powers.

Recommendation 4A.
Use regulatory powers to deter non-compliance with SDA laws and regulations

Taking a proactive approach to regulation and testing CAV's powers within the SDA ecosystem could prevent certain matters unnecessarily escalating to RDRV or VCAT. This could involve considering the use of infringement notice with non-compliant providers, including in relation to provider responsibilities to install fixtures and cover the cost of damage.

Recommendation 4B.
Clearly communicate what enforcement action CAV can and can't take

CAV should be more upfront about its powers and where it can take action in relation to ensuring SDA compliance.

Publishing this information in an accessible format on CAV's website, similar to how the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) does in relation to its role pertaining to consumer rights and guarantees, would help make CAV's role clearer to SDA providers, residents and their family members.[7]

5. Remove end dates on SDA residency agreements, or explain why these are needed in clear terms

Current Victorian legislation requires SDA providers to list a lease term and end date on the SDA agreement. This is despite leases being ongoing, with only very specific grounds for termination of the lease.

This is confusing for residents who may think they can stay in their SDA home forever and see their home as a home for life, while at the same time being subject to a shorter fixed term lease that may be periodically renewed. Feedback from industry members suggests there were big variations in the length of lease included in tenancy agreements (from 12 months up to 5 years, among those we spoke to), despite a general understanding that leases are long-term.

Further, as leases are long term, residents should be able to easily personalise their home.

Recommendation 5A.
Amend Section 498J Content of SDA residency agreement of Part 12A of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* to either remove the requirement for an end date in a SDA residency agreement or clarify circumstances where it would be appropriate

The Victorian Government should either remove lease terms and end dates on leases from SDA agreements and recognise this as such in legislation, or, make it explicitly clear on the circumstances in which a lease term and end date are necessary and appropriate and how this needs to be clearly explained in the SDA agreement.

If there are circumstances where it is necessary and appropriate for a SDA resident to be subject to a SDA residency agreement with a lease period and end date, clearly state this in the aforementioned agreement with an explanation as to why this is necessary.

6. Explore issues further through consultation and co-design

Many of the issues identified in this research would strongly benefit from further in-depth research and consultation, including with people living in SDA and in particular residents in arrangements like SIL homes who are underrepresented in this research.

With the exception of representation from one community sector worker in the Advisory Group, this research was also unable to capture the broader perspectives of people who work in frontline community sector, disability and housing advocacy roles. People in these roles hold a wealth of information and insight into the experiences people with disability face in navigating their tenancy rights. Their day-to-day work gives them a distinctive understanding of the issues, challenges and potential solutions. Future research and engagement relating to SDA and disability housing would benefit from including these perspectives.

- Review Part 12A of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* to assess shortcomings with regulation and governance to SDA and identify reform needed, by bringing stakeholders together.
- Ensure any reforms to SDA are informed by lived experience and co-designed with the SDA community.
- Prioritise First Nations voices and culturally safe engagement. Ensure any consultation and research respects Indigenous Data Sovereignty.
- Continue consultation with frontline workers operating in disability legal, advocacy and tenancy roles.

Reforms needed at the Federal level

Issues with the NDIS are front of mind for many residents and family members. Many of these problems are well-documented, including most notably through the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, and most recently through research published by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI).[8] There is considerable opportunity for the Federal Government and specifically the NDIS to improve its services, systems and policies.

CAV should remain across these issues and potential solutions, and raise them with the Federal Government.

Establish dedicated resources for support workers, NDIS participants and family members to navigate SDA in the first instance

For most participants and their family members, entry into SDA was defined by complexity rather than clarity. Many residents are underfunded to fully support their needs, some are unaware that they are receiving funding for SDA, or could apply for funding.

Funding applications, extensive paperwork and long wait times create frustration, particularly for families already managing significant care responsibilities.

NDIS participants and their families need a consistent point of contact and practical guidance throughout the SDA application process.

Enhancing this process would reduce complexity, confusion and reliance on personal advocacy. The Federal Government should explore implementing the following potential solutions:

- **Establish dedicated resources such as a helpline for NDIS support workers** to upskill workers, improve information provision and make the process easier for residents and their families.
- **Provide clear and accessible information on the SDA application process** that is designed specifically for residents, family members and other carers.
- **Improve searchability functions for SDA homes** through a database of providers, to make people aware of their options.

Issue clear documentation to show a person has SDA funding

From the perspective of SDA providers, an important step in a participant's application process is identifying their funding arrangements. However, providers' visibility of a participant's NDIS plan to confirm their SDA funding is inconsistent and this can create issues and challenges. NDIS participants' plans do not always show a person's funding, even if they've received approval.

Information provided should be limited to the SDA funding only.

The Federal Government should mandate the NDIS to issue a straightforward letter to SDA providers (separate to a participant's NDIS plan), to confirm in simple terms that a person has SDA funding, and the amount of the funding.

Review SDA design standards to ensure homes are built and modified to support resident needs and quality of life

While the people residents are supported by and live with are the most important influences on their home experience, there are some key features of SDA homes that make a big difference in supporting residents in their daily life.

This includes features like outdoor space, ensuites and second living rooms in shared homes, and adequate storage.

Insights from industry suggests obligations under the National Construction Code (NCC) in the context of multi-resident SDA do not necessarily support treating SDA as a home, but can impose institutional design features.

- Review standards for SDA homes to ensure essential resident needs like storage are included as 'minimum standard' design features, or recognised as 'above and beyond' design choices with certification. Any 'standardisation' needs to ensure flexibility for resident needs.
- Review the NCC in the context of multi-resident SDA so that obligations recognise SDA as a home.

Endnotes

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