

NSW DISABILITY NETWORK FORUM

Submission to Senate Inquiry into Accommodation for People With Disabilities and the NDIS

4 March 2016

Submission to Senate Inquiry into Accommodation for People With Disabilities and the NDIS

The NSW Disability Network Forum (DNF) welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the inquiry of the Senate Joint Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) into Accommodation for People With Disabilities and the NDIS. This submission makes particular comment on individualised housing solutions and funding models.

About the NSW Disability Network Forum

Initiated in June 2011, the NSW Disability Network Forum (DNF) comprises non-government, non-provider peak representative, advocacy and information groups whose primary aim is to promote the interests of people with disability. The aim of the NSW Disability Network Forum is to build capacity within and across all organisations and groups so that the interests of people with disability are advanced through policy and systemic advocacy. The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) provides secretariat support to the DNF.

NSW Disability Network Forum Member Organisations:

Aboriginal Disability Network NSW	Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW
Association of Blind Citizens of NSW	BEING Mental Health & Wellbeing Consumer Advisory Group
Brain Injury Association NSW	NSW Council for Intellectual Disability
Deaf Australia NSW	NSW Disability Advocacy Network
Deaf Society of NSW	People with Disability Australia
DeafBlind Association NSW	Physical Disability Council of NSW
Deafness Council (NSW)	Positive Life NSW
Information on Disability and Education Awareness Services (IDEAS) NSW	Self Advocacy Sydney
Institute For Family Advocacy	Side By Side Advocacy Incorporated
Intellectual Disability Rights Service	Council of Social Service of NSW

Outline of this submission

On 2 December 2015, the DNF held a Forum entitled *Beyond accommodation: Housing that works for people with disability*. The event aimed to highlight the DNF's vision of safe, secure, affordable and accessible housing, independent of disability support. Speakers showed that with the right support, people with disability can access an array of housing options that will give them real choice and control in their lives. The Forum was intended to highlight to decision makers that a person's disability should not determine where they live, and that flexible funding can give people with disability, including those with high support needs, the autonomy to enable them to live in their own home, in the community. Four people, each with significant disability, spoke powerfully about their homes in the community, and what made it work for them.

This submission will explore the DNF's vision for housing for people with disability, and build on the case studies and the research presented at the DNF Forum.¹ It will also explore case studies promoting choice and control for people who may have required 24 hour care if they were not embedded in the community. Some examples provided in the profiles are the same as people who may be the clientele of specialist disability accommodation, but they have been supported to use their funding creatively as a contribution to the 'infrastructure' which supports their independent living. This would be a creative and equitable application of the 'user cost of capital' concept often referred to by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) in relation to accommodation.

The case studies demonstrate methods of assisting those with high support needs other than specialist disability services, showing:

- strategies to mitigate the need for a specialist built form;
- strategies to mitigate support needs based on the nature of the participant's disability and lack of informal support; and
- ways in which the NDIA funding models could support these strategies.

NSW Supported Living Fund; enabling a flexible approach to independent living

The NSW Government has adopted a creative approach to independent living through the Supported Living Fund (SLF). A \$60 million investment over 5 years announced in 2011, 350 SLF packages enabled people with disability to be flexibly funded to develop or implement a vision for their life in the community with a mix of formal and informal supports.² The average SLF package was \$50 000 per person per annum, which could be one-off or recurrent. The amount of a person's package could change over time, depending on their plan (for example, increased funding when a person is changing from planning how they will move out of home to moving out of home).

Because of its flexibility, the SLF funding was truly tailored to the individual with disability. Some used their home funding to develop plans to move into their own home, others to help pay for support to live with them in their home, and still others to build informal support networks (including by attending activities in the community.)

The final SLF packages were allocated in 2012. People with packages continue to be supported, but it is unclear whether flexible uses of their funding (such as provision of a rent subsidy for a home sharer) will be viewed by the NDIA as a 'reasonable and necessary' component of their NDIS package.

¹ Speakers have been de-identified where requested.

²NSW Aging Disability and Home Care (January 2012) "[Supported living for people with a disability](#)"

DNF vision for housing for people with disability

The DNF believes it is important that options for housing support offered by the NDIA contain or promote these elements:

- choice and control, including choice from models other than those currently available;
- separation of housing and support; and
- high expectations of people with disability.

The elements of this vision are explored below. Due to the low expectations commonly placed on people with disability, advocacy is critical to realising this vision and enabling people with disability to access the housing they want, which meets their needs and facilitates their active participation in society.

Choice and control

The starting point for housing options for people with disability should be Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People With Disability (CRPD) which states that people with disability must:

“have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement”

In November 2015, the Council of Australian Governments reaffirmed its vision is for an inclusive Australian society that enables people with disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens.³

The essence of Article 19 is that people with disability must have a real choice in relation to their housing. This extends to choice about:

- where they live (close to family or work);
- with whom they live (alone, with a partner, friends or family, rather than unknown people with disability); and
- how their disability support is provided - people with disability must not be implicitly obliged to live in a particular living arrangement.

It should be remembered that the NDIS aims to ensure people with disability have choice and control over the services and support they receive. It is imperative that all people with disability, including those with the highest support needs, are enabled to realise these aims. The DNF urges the NDIA to take steps to ensure that low expectations of the ability of people with high support needs and/or a continuation of well-understood models (such as supported accommodation) do not produce the unintended consequence of excluding these people from exercising choice and control to the full extent of their ability.

The DNF agrees with the Standing Committee’s observation that without choice and housing, the choice and control that people with disability can have over their lives is limited. We are not naïve to the high costs of housing and are not advocating for unlimited choice in this area; we recognise that

³ COAG (2015) [NDIS - Principles to Determine the Responsibilities of the NDIS and Other Service Systems](#)

few people in the community have complete choice about housing. Rather, the DNF is advocating for funding models in relation to accommodation for people with disability under the NDIS that enable the tradeoffs made by people with disability (in regard to budget, needs and preferences) to mirror those made by others, rather than being circumscribed by Government policy.

A note on cost

The DNF recognises the importance of the financial sustainability of the NDIS, and that it would be prohibitively expensive for the NDIS to individually fund each participant on the basis of formal support alone.

However, research into the effectiveness of supported living in relation to shared accommodation for people requiring 24 hour care conducted by the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) found a range of support approaches effective in terms of both costs and quality of life of people with disability.⁴ Over time, all approaches had moved away from providing 24 hour care because when the right elements of formal and informal supports were put into place, 24 hour care was not needed. An important element of success explored in the SPRC research was that support was provided through a mix of formal and informal mechanisms, with an investment in developing informal support.

The importance of developing informal support was emphasised by a service provider who presented at the DNF Forum. The service provider has explored the development of individualised options for people with very high support needs, and found that this model would operate on a significant loss on current funding level. The service provider strongly advocates for investment in assisting its clients to develop informal support networks, so that formal support can more effectively promote an individual's quality of life.

Separation of housing and support

Traditionally, supported accommodation, where support is tied to housing, has been a favoured model of providing housing to people with disability. Under this model, choice is limited and a person's capacity to exercise control is hampered because the service provider holds power over two integral aspects of their life. The separation of housing and support is a critical element to the DNF's vision for housing for people with disability.

The separation of housing and support is implemented in some locations throughout Australia.⁵ The housing is owned by a housing provider who is independent of the service system, meaning that residents can exercise tenancy rights over their home and can separately choose the nature and source of their disability support.

New options

It is crucial that people with high support needs are not funnelled into existing group accommodation simply because it is the model currently in use. What is critical is that people are

⁴ Social Policy Research Centre, (2007) [Effectiveness of Supported Living in relation to Shared Accommodation](#)

⁵ Wiesel I; Laragy C; Gendera S; Fisher KR; Jenkinson S; Hill T; Finch K; Shaw W; Bridge C (2015), [Moving to my home: Housing aspirations, transitions and outcomes of people with disability](#), AHURI Final Report No.246. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute p 50.

able to exercise choice and control, including from models other than those currently available for people with disability.

It is also worth noting that in this context, an 'innovative' solution would be giving people choice and control over where they live and who they live with through access to viable alternatives to supported accommodation.

The DNF is concerned that within the NDIA Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Pricing and Payments Framework, the indicative benchmark price seems to anticipate congregate living. The indicative formulas being expressed as:

$$\text{Benchmark price} = \text{Dwelling price} / \text{Anticipated number of dwelling residents}^6$$

creates a financial incentive for NDIS participants to live together. It is important that the foundations of the NDIS accommodation strategy leave room for new solutions rather than privileging existing congregate models.

High expectations

In line with COAG's vision and the aims of the NDIS, housing options available should be underpinned by high expectations of people with disability, and allow them to live as equal citizens.

Assumptions often made in relation to types of accommodation and funding models in this area (for example that some participants lack the capacity to live in the community, and that people who lack informal support should live in specialist accommodation) overlook the fact that living in the community can increase a person's capacity, including crucially by allowing them to develop and maintain informal support networks. Specialist accommodation can create a self-fulfilling cycle of isolation and dependence. It should be noted that this dependence will have an ongoing cost impact on the NDIS.

The DNF reflects that that the group home model perpetuates low expectations because support workers are under pressure to simultaneously meet the needs of many people with disability. As a result, support workers do not have the time or the mindset to support people to do things for themselves or to learn skills to take on new tasks. In contrast, one of the speakers at the DNF Forum, "Shu" a person with intellectual disability, explained that her mother had very deliberately supported her to learn to do tasks that she would have to do for herself if she had a home of her own. Shu is from a cultural background in which parents are very protective and worried about adult children living separately to the family. She has a job and was able to rent a property close to her workplace. The property was close enough to the family home for her mother to visit and had room for her to stay overnight, as well as being close to public transport, enabling Shu to visit her family easily. With the right property and a lot of preparation, Shu and her family came to agree that the time was right for her to move out.

⁶ Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Pricing and Payments Framework [21].

An example of high expectations – Rose

“Rose” is a woman with deafblindness who lives in her own home. She was educated at Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children from an early age as a deaf student, losing her sight in early adulthood. Rose and her family thought independent living would be a good experience, and her father helped her look for a rental property in her early 20s. Independent living was fun and Rose overcame many challenges, enlisting the neighbours’ help when she locked herself out!

In young adulthood, Rose also travelled to the USA, introducing ‘hand over sign’ to Australia on her return.

Rose now lives in a property she owned with her husband (who unfortunately passed away). Receiving a SLF package, she uses an interpreter-guide to access the community and assist her with domestic tasks. Her quality of life improved when she became eligible for an interpreter-guide to assist her on the weekend.

Many people with Rose’s profile live in supported accommodation, but Rose lives in the community and gives motivational talks to others with disability. Her experience shows the importance of high expectations, and the role of the right paid support in making independent living work.

Will choice and control be fostered if we keep building more group homes?

In October 2015, the NSW Government released a tender for the redevelopment of large residential centres in the Hunter region (the NSW NDIS trial site). The DNF is concerned that the tender does not require a separation of housing and support. The tender Expression Of Interest states that respondents may be a single provider of both housing and support or joint proposals can be lodged by separate housing providers and disability service providers. Additionally, models that group five people with disability together are a dominant theme of the tender documents, which note that people are likely to require ‘specialist supported accommodation for up to five people’, and that the ten houses that the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) will complete in 2016 will house 50 residents⁷.

Once resources are locked into bricks and mortar, it will be harder to unlock them. Accordingly, it is important that the NDIA work closely with the States and Territories to ensure their actions do not hamper the realisation of choice and control in relation to accommodation, and that the separation of housing and support is actively promoted.

Cost effective strategies to reduce the need for paid support

Strategy 1: Living in one’s own home with a combination of paid and informal support

Many people with disability use reduced or rent free accommodation as an incentive to attract home sharers who provide negotiated informal support and assist the person in extending their networks, thus further developing informal support opportunities.

⁷ Department of Family and Community Services (October 2015), *Development and Facilities Management of Disability Housing to Replace Hunter Residences Large Residential Centres; Request for Expression of Interest*, p9.

This strategy is cost effective, and improves quality of life for people with disability:

- Home sharers offer support and contribution in daily living tasks like shopping, cooking and cleaning, saving dollars that would be spent on drop-in paid support for these tasks.
- Home sharers stay over a minimum number of nights per week, which is comparatively less costly than paying overnight support workers for equivalent hours.
- Home sharers are often instrumental in widening the networks and friendships of people with disability, saving costs associated with providing paid support to undertake this work.

Paid and informal support as an alternative to supported accommodation

Strategies to mitigate need for a specialist built form

The person with disability lives in a home of their choosing in the private or social housing market. Home modifications can be provided at reasonable cost because they only need to accommodate the needs of one person with disability.

Strategies to mitigate need based on the nature of disability and lack of informal support

Organisations like Homes West⁸ provides significant assistance to build, maintain and strengthen informal support around the person with disability. The home sharer arrangement is specifically designed to open opportunities for new relationships.

The Circles of Support initiative in South Australia has supported people who lived for many years in institutions to live in their own homes. Significant and ongoing assistance is provided to strengthen and maintain informal support.⁹

Some service providers, such as Community Connections in the ACT are assisting people to develop home share arrangements.¹⁰

The NDIA can enable home sharing as informal support through:

- Policy that enables a rent subsidy for home sharers. The home share arrangement is cost effective because the home sharer may open their network of family and friends to the person with disability. A person with disability is unlikely to be able to afford to subsidise the rent of their home sharer.
- Allowing funding to be used in ways that enhance the development, maintenance and strengthening of informal support.

⁸ See <http://www.homeswest.org.au>.

⁹Community Living Project "[Circles Initiative](#)"

¹⁰ For more information, see "[Homeshare; Community Connections](#)"

Sarah can be 'her own boss'

"Sarah" is a 24 year old woman with a significant intellectual disability from Southern NSW. Three years ago, Sarah's younger sister was planning to move to Wollongong for university, her older brother had already left home. Sarah decided "the youngest shouldn't move out before me".

Initially, Sarah rented a four bedroom house with the idea of sharing. Supported Living Fund funding allowed for a rental subsidy for house sharers who provided in-kind support. Her first housemate was a young woman her own age. Although her housemate received orientation, the relationship didn't work out. An ex-support worker, studying nursing asked to move in; an arrangement which worked well for 6 months until she left to work in Sydney. After the experience of sharing and gaining confidence in her own place, Sarah decided she would prefer to live without housemates. She moved into a two bedroom unit, and now lives with a support worker who is paid an 'availability allowance' to assist Sarah in emergencies.

Since moving out of home, her capacity has increased tremendously. Sarah can now do her own washing, grocery shopping and get to places she needs to go on time. She rides her bike to and from work at a bakery, the shops and her voluntary position in a creche. Eight hours drop-in support is provided by a local woman who Sarah found via Gumtree. In addition to formal support, Sarah has an informal network of family, friends and community members who help her out when she needs it. These networks also provide informal safeguards which have activated when Sarah has had experienced random events such as an accident riding her bike. Sarah loves her life and her own home is a big part of that. She loves being 'the boss' of her own things and has no intention of moving back in with her parents!

Sarah's story shows that like everyone, people with disability needs to be able to change their circumstance as it suits them. People in Sarah's life having high expectations of her has allowed her to thrive, and being embedded in the community has strengthened her informal support networks. Without flexible funding provided by the SLF, Sarah would need far more paid support (at greater cost).

Simon leads a full life

"Simon" is a man with autism and high support needs who has a range of valued roles delivering the local paper one day per week, working in a local hardware store two half days and delivering vegetables for a local co-op.

Simon lives in his own home but is not yet safe to be alone. To meet this need for safety and to help Simon to meet more people, he shares his home with Tom who works full time in the city and has committed to sharing his life and providing informal support.

How it works: Tom spends 4 evenings per week with Simon, sharing a meal, watching TV and generally hanging out. On a further 2 nights, Tom is expected to be home by 10. On all 6 nights, Tom assists Simon to get ready for bed. In recognition of this commitment, particularly given the support required is active and persistent, Tom does not pay any rent.

In addition, Simon has a team of six paid support workers who assist him with daily living, complementing the informal support from Tom. Simon's family believe that Tom has made a big difference to Simon's quality of life. Without him, Simon would require 24/7 paid support.

Source: Homes West, Queensland (<http://www.homeswest.org.au>)

Strategy 2: Shared Lives Plus

How it works: Shared Lives Plus provides short and long term arrangements where the individual with disability moves in to live with the Shared Lives carer and their family.

The Shared Lives approach enables people to achieve goals such as:

- being in control of their services and their lives;
- pursuing ordinary lives within their chosen families and relationships;
- taking risks in a safe way; and
- being valued by their communities and feeling like they belong.

Drop in paid support complements the support provided by the family and the person goes out to activities during the day.

In England in 2013/14 over 9,600 people were being supported in Shared Lives arrangements with over 5,000 living in long term arrangements. The majority of people supported by Shared Lives have a learning disability.¹¹

The Shared Lives family is supported by an organisation that:

- provides resources, training, insurance and one-to- one support; and
- enables Shared Lives carers to talk to, support and learn from each other.

Examples of people supported:

'Alan', 23 has Asperger's Syndrome. He had moved between several expensive out-of-area services after his family and then a local residential service found his behaviour and excessive drinking too challenging to manage. Alan was carefully matched with approved Shared Lives carers and lived with them successfully for 12 months.

"George" is a 53 year old man with physical and intellectual disability who had lived most of his life in an institution. When the institution closed, George wanted to live closer to his sisters. A Shared Living arrangement was developed whereby a couple lived with George providing care and companionship and helping him build his own links into the community.¹²

Shared Lives as an alternative to supported accommodation

Strategies to mitigate need for a specialist built form:

¹¹ SharedLives Plus (2014) [The State of Shared Lives in England](#)

¹² SharedLives Plus (2014) [The State of Shared Lives in England](#)

The person with disability lives with a family, a couple or another individual with whom they have been matched. The placement is supported and monitored.

Strategies to mitigate need based on nature of disability and lack of informal support

The Shared Lives family provides built in informal support. The carers are not paid by the hour but paid in relation to the nature of care and support required. Informal support is also generated through connection to the family, friends and neighbours of the Shared Lives family.

Most people make new friends through their use of Shared Lives, with one third making five or more. Half go on their first ever holiday.¹³

Cost comparison with specialist disability accommodation

The average net savings from a long term Shared Lives arrangement per person per year is 26,000 pounds for people with learning difficulties and 8,000 pounds for people with mental health issues.¹⁴

The NDIA can enable Shared Lives by:

- market and sector development sections of the NDIA taking steps to stimulate the development and growth of the Shared Lives approach;
- provision of home modifications for the home of the home sharer where needed; and
- promotion of Universal Design in housing so that new stock is built to enable more households to host a person who requires accessible design.

The role of technology in mitigating the need for a specialist built form and paid support

Technology can be used to increase independence of many people with high support needs, reducing their reliance on paid support. This is well illustrated by 'demonstration homes' developed by the Summer Foundation, often in partnership with other organisations (including housing providers).

For example, the Abbotsford Project comprises six fully accessible one-bedroom apartments integrated into a 59 unit mixed private and social housing development. The multi-storey, in-fill development is located in a prime inner city location, close to transport, shops and community facilities. The apartments and the site incorporate a range of design and technology features to support independence and safety. In this model, staff are centrally available to the tenants 24 hours per day.¹⁵

There is the same core technology in each apartment:

- Each tenant can alert staff at any time in the event of an emergency or need for urgent unplanned assistance using a range of devices (such as pendant, alert on the wall, alert button on an IPAD or smart phone). In response to the alert, staff can make two-way voice

¹³ SharedLives Plus (2014) [The State of Shared Lives in England](#), p6.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Fyffe, C, (2015), [Learnings from the Abbotsford Housing Demonstration Project – 2012-2013](#), Melbourne: Summer Foundation Ltd.

contact with the tenant in their unit through hands free speakers and microphones located in all major rooms in their unit.

- Via an IPAD or smartphone, tenants can operate the lighting, blinds, heating and cooling in their units as well as open the door to their unit and open the door to the apartment building to let visitors in.

[The technology is demonstrated in this video.](#)¹⁶

These features can be used without the availability of (centrally located) 24-hour care. People with high support needs can use this technology to increase their independence and sense of security, as well as facilitating reliable communication, safety and security arrangements with informal support and back up staff for emergencies and contingencies. These systems reduce the need for paid support.

The bigger picture; what makes for successful housing transitions for people with disability?

In a recent report, Vazel et al of the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) examined the housing aspirations, transitions and outcomes of 51 people with disability throughout Australia, reporting on the barriers to and enablers of successful transitions.¹⁷

Barriers to successful housing transitions (across all tenures) included:

- housing affordability – for purchasing and renting;
- lack of rental history and references;
- shortfall in accessible or adaptable private stock (to rent or buy); and
- difficulty accessing finance.

Enablers of successful housing transitions (across all tenures) included:

- housing which is well located; near public transport and family/other informal support;
- assistance with rental forms;
- established relationships with landlords - Half of the participants in the study who successfully secured a private rental tenancy had an informal relationship with the real-estate agent or landlord prior to applying for a tenancy; and
- shared equity – This is seen as a mechanism to ‘leverage’ finance from people with disability and their families. The person with disability and Community Housing Provider share ownership of the house; giving full ownership rights to the person with disability. Occupiers contribute between 25-50% of equity. Shared equity exist in Western Australia, but not in NSW.

¹⁶ Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DvjpQpBlpc&feature=youtu.be>.

¹⁷ Wiesel I; Laragy C; Gendera S; Fisher KR; Jenkinson S; Hill T; Finch K; Shaw W; Bridge C (2015), [Moving to my home: Housing aspirations, transitions and outcomes of people with disability](#), AHURI Final Report No.246. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

The enablers demonstrate the importance of community and informal support, which can assist people with disability in all aspects of their lives. The authors also suggest that sufficient support needs to be factored into NDIS participants' support plans to allow people to be supported to make decisions about preferred housing arrangements, and to search, apply for and maintain housing.¹⁸

The way forward

It is often assumed that some NDIS participants need 'specialist' accommodation. This assumption has the potential to perpetuate the myth that congregate living is best for some people with disability. The case studies in this submission demonstrate that it is possible to invest in individualised solutions which are more cost effective than congregate living because they develop and draw on informal support to create home, not accommodation. An investment in assisting a participant to develop informal supports greatly enriches their lives, as well as meeting the objectives of the NDIS and ensuring the NDIS is sustainable.

In accordance with the aims of the NDIS, all appropriate accommodation options and funding models considered by the NDIA should embody the elements in the vision for housing put forward by the DNF and in Article 19 of the CRPD; choices reflecting those available to others without disability and allowing for control through the separation of housing and support.

Living in the community increases peoples' capacity, creates resilience to the changes which inevitably happen in life, and preserves the opportunity for people to live according to their own culture. For example Shu, referred to above, was able to rent a property close to her workplace, and was also able to rent a different property when her employer moved to different premises. When her mother died, she was able to have her father move in with her and to take on some caring responsibility for him – which is expected in her culture.

Though some speakers at the DNF forum may not be eligible for housing assistance from the NDIA under the current 'user cost of capital' criteria, not providing them such assistance creates the risk of decreasing their capacity, and consequently increasing the number of people with higher support needs who may meet the eligibility threshold. When people with disability are not supported to plan and prepare for a future in which they have the opportunity to live in a home of their own, crisis situations arise. Parents die or become too unwell to be carers, leaving their son or daughter distressed and reliant on whatever alternative arrangement can be made. Such situations will continue to be repeated if assistance is provided on the basis of objective 'current need' rather than their individual circumstances.

Consistent with choice and control, it is important that people with disability are supported to find the right housing option for them after being assessed as eligible for accommodation support, rather than slotted into specialist supported accommodation. This of course requires a range of options to be available or come onto the market, which are genuine alternatives to the congregate supported accommodation options currently available.

The DNF acknowledges that the transition to new housing models will not be immediate. Particularly while the market is evolving, it is important that the NDIA promote the use of 'Person Centred Active

¹⁸ Wiesel I; Laragy C; Gendera S; Fisher KR; Jenkinson S; Hill T; Finch K; Shaw W; Bridge C (2015), [*Moving to my home: Housing aspirations, transitions and outcomes of people with disability*](#), AHURI Final Report No.246. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. p 3.

Support' in congregate settings. In this approach, people with disability participate and are engaged in every aspect of their support, and support workers are assessed on how effectively this is implemented.¹⁹

Person Centred Active Support

Person Centred Active Support is a way of providing just the right amount of assistance to enable a person with intellectual disability to successfully take part in meaningful activities and social relationships. Support workers who use Person Centred Active Support:

- see that every moment has potential for a person to be engaged;
- provide little amounts of assistance often;
- provide just enough assistance of the right kind, to enable a person to succeed in doing all or part of a task; and
- provide opportunities for people to exercise choice and control over many aspects of their lives.²⁰

Support workers can use Person Centred Active Support with everyone, regardless of their degree of intellectual or physical impairment. For example, a support worker says:

I support a person who has profound intellectual disability whose name is Ellie. She can't understand all the words that I use when I talk to her, and she doesn't use words to communicate with me. We communicate in other ways. When I want to know whether she's enjoying an activity I watch her face and her body language – when she smiles I can tell she's pleased to be involved. When I want her to make a choice I might show her objects such as a jar of coffee or a pot of tea, or let her try out both things and watch her reaction. Sometimes she uses gestures such as pushing me away, or pointing to things to communicate. She also uses sounds, which are called vocalisations, to tell me whether she's happy or not. She has a communication dictionary that the staff team produced with the support of a speech therapist. This book lists the various sounds and body language that she uses to communicate. I often refer to this book. Sometimes when we are driving I just talk to Ellie. I know she can't understand what I am saying, but she can hear the tone of my voice and sense my excitement about where we are going, and she enjoys just being part of the conversation.²¹

The case studies used in this submission demonstrate the importance of taking a creative approach to the user cost of capital and NDIS housing support in general, rather than basing solutions on bricks and mortar alone. Systems enabling eligible individuals to use their funding flexibly, as a

¹⁹ For more information, see <http://www.activesupportresource.net.au/>.

²⁰ [Every Moment Has Potential: Person Centred Active Support online learning resource workbook](#) / (2015) Department of Industry, Greystanes Disability Services, Living with Disability Research Group at La Trobe University, Christine Bigby, Emma Bould, Silvia Warren; Prue Adams, Arna Radovich, editors, p10.

²¹ Ibid, p23.

contribution to the 'infrastructure' necessary to enable them to live in the community, is both cost effective and consistent with the aims of the NDIS.

Draft recommendations for the Select Committee:

1. All solutions and funding models in relation to accommodation under the NDIS considered by the NDIA embody the elements in the vision for housing put forward by the DNF and in Article 19 of the CRPD. These elements are:
 - a. choice and control, including choice from models other than those currently available;
 - b. separation of housing and support; and
 - c. high expectations of people with disability.
2. People with disability are supported to find the right housing option for them after being assessed as eligible for accommodation support, rather than slotted into specialist supported accommodation.
3. Assessment of the need for housing assistance and the assistance provided, respects the person's culture and lifestyle (for example taking into account the important role that family plays to certain individuals), as well as the right of adults with disability to make decisions about where and with whom they live.
4. The NDIA take a creative approach to the user cost of capital, including using it or other 'streams' of the NDIS to make investments in the home sharing, Shared Lives and technological strategies referred to in this submission. Funding should be able to be used in ways which allow participants to develop and maintain informal support networks.
5. The NDIA work closely with State and Territory Governments to ensure their actions do not hamper the realisation of access to choice and control in accommodation, and ensure the separation of housing and support is actively promoted.
6. Sufficient support to make decisions about preferred housing arrangements, and to search, apply for and maintain housing is factored into NDIS participants' support plans.
7. The NDIA promote the use of 'Person Centred Active Support' in specialist settings, particularly while the accommodation market is evolving.