



## **Submission to the Joint Standing Parliamentary Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme on Accommodation for People with a Disability**

Community Lifestyle Accommodation Ltd (CLA) welcomes the opportunity to submit this paper to the Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) on accommodation for people with a disability.

The NDIS is a welcome, significant and enduring achievement. As the scheme rolls out progressively across Australia, it will assist people with disabilities to live with dignity and choice through the provision of appropriately planned and funded support arrangements. At the same time, it has highlighted the dilemma of how to create sufficient and appropriate housing to meet the growing need for accommodation for people with a wide range of disabilities. The dignity of choice, independence and inclusion can only be fully realised if availability of flexible, affordable and accessible housing options can be assured. Unfortunately, in the current market, suitable housing options are seldom available.

As governments and communities of interest work to understand and respond to this challenge, there is a need to ensure that consideration is given to a myriad of possible models for housing, and to the different ways of achieving the necessary financial resources to make that wide variety of options available. The community residential unit or home for between four to six individuals became a standard for providing housing and support combined. It was a bridge between institutional accommodation and community-based living. Many such houses now exist and can remain a viable part of a comprehensive approach to housing provision. However, while community residential units may continue to be a suitable option for some individuals with disabilities, for many other individuals there will be a need and desire for increasingly creative and innovative solutions that enable the person to achieve the lifestyle of their choice, in the community they belong and within arrangements that offer maximum control over who he or she would like to live with. Expectations are becoming more sophisticated and we need to be able to respond to that natural progression in choice and demand. For effective response to become a reality, a mix of accessible and affordable housing needs to be created, both as part of public housing and through the private sector.

At the same time, government needs to consciously recognise and understand that individuals with disabilities, especially those with a severe/profound Intellectual disability, have no opportunity to accrue the capital wealth required to make a substantial financial contribution to accommodation on their own behalf. Their carers too are often challenged financially due to marriage breakdowns and reduction in paid work arising from the need to meet their caring responsibilities at the same time as they have also met the additional costs of raising a child with a disability, plus supporting their other children. Combined with the additional expense of building or renovating housing suitable for people with disabilities in appropriately located settings, the cost of providing housing is simply beyond the personal capacity of most individuals and their families.

CLA is a grassroots, community-based organisation that has risen to respond to the needs of ageing carers, and their middle-aged sons and daughters with disability. CLA supports 45 carers who are aged between 65 and 88 years on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria. It does not receive any government funding support for the work it does. These carers are in urgent need of accommodation for their adult son or daughter with a moderate to severe disability. They have cared for their dependents for many years while awaiting appropriate accommodation. Many individuals have no hope of the home and support they need before their carers are forced to relinquish their care due to ill health or death. Carers fear what will happen to their son or daughter in the future and how hard the transition will be if it occurs due to an emergency.

Recognising that there will be a need for supported housing that enables individuals to live together, but in an environment that is substantially different to the prevalent community residential services model, CLA has worked to design an innovative model of housing that responds to the needs of a variety of individuals while maximising use of available support dollars. The Cloverleaf Housing Project in Rosebud offers one solution to the on-going need for supported accommodation. It is the result of CLA's proactive and diligent development of a unique partnership that actively raises awareness of individual and carer needs, and seeks resources to achieve their dream of responsive housing and support that will meet the needs of their son or daughter within a community that offers acceptance and inclusion. CLA strongly believes that this model is replicable, and that it offers one way forward in achieving the housing and support dreams of many Australians living with a significant disability.

The partnership comprises CLA, Southern Mornington Peninsula Uniting Church, Uniting Church Property Trust, Housing Choices Australia (HCA) and Melba Support Services. The partnership has already gained the substantial commitment of the Mornington Shire, the Department of Health and Human Services Victoria (DHHS), and the Bendigo Bank.

The Cloverleaf Housing Project has been creatively designed to enable residents to live with responsive but unobtrusive support from paid staff. The development (Attachment 1) will comprise a two-story building with 4 separate units for 2 people in each unit, joined by a lobby area on each floor that will connect the 2 units. The ground floor will provide accommodation for four adults with high support needs, while the first level, will enable four people with a moderate level of disability to develop their abilities. Residents of each unit will have their own bedroom and enjoy shared living space including dining, kitchen and laundry. Each unit has large bedrooms, so residents can have their own furniture as well as private en-suites. Each floor also has a disability-friendly bathroom and staff room. A north-facing courtyard ensures sun in all rooms. The buildings will have a high energy rating, reducing living and operating costs. In addition, the units will benefit from tailored technology solutions that support optimal independence for residents and occupational health and safety for staff. Over time, this foresight will ensure a reduction in unnecessary recurrent support costs.

More than just accommodation, the Cloverleaf project envisages that these will be real 'homes' that are part of an active and engaged community. Residents will choose to live on the same site and the person who will share their unit will be their choice. Residents will have access to personalised support, designed with them to meet their unique requirements at the time they need and want it. This support will be funded through the NDIS and provided by Melba. Each person will have an Individual

Plan that reflects their interests and choices, and that directs staff in the delivery of support. These plans will identify both existing and new community support and engagement opportunities based on individual interests and connections. This will enable the development of partnerships with organisations, services, community members and local activities that can expand, enhance and ensure engagement in the community. Residents where possible would be encouraged to choose their support staff for recreational events etc.

Melba is renowned for its creative, effective, flexible person-centred service delivery. Families and friends will be welcome at all times and the community hub will offer additional facilities for family dinners and celebrations. The Uniting Church Rosebud congregation has been both proactive and progressive in their approach to welcoming their new neighbours through the planned re-development of that building. It is envisaged that more community activities, e.g. crafts, cafe and community garden, will extend social interaction and activity engagement opportunities for future residents. This new residential setting will be ideally located in very close proximity to the centre of Rosebud, offering many options for local engagement and participation. Recreation, shopping, educational services, public transport, and medical supports are all within walking distance.

The intent and quality of the Cloverleaf Project's accommodation and support is assured through a governance structure that entrenches partnership, community inclusion and effective risk management. The Cloverleaf Committee of Management will include representatives from CLA and the Southern Mornington Peninsula Uniting Church as well as local members with the skills and commitment to foster person-centred supports, increasing partnerships, community inclusion and responsible governance in the areas of finance and risk. Responsibility for building this project will be vested in a capable and experienced Project Control Group incorporating HCA, CLA, and Uniting Church Australia Property Trust. After completion of the building phase, HCA will be sub-contracted to ensure effective tenancy and property management and Melba will be contracted to manage service support arrangements. This partnership combines the scale, skills and stability of a respected national housing association, with a highly skilled, passionate community service provider, who will together deliver a flexible, innovative, sustainable, accountable, safe and professionally managed accommodation option, now and in the future.

This project is possible because of the generous commitment of the Uniting Church to provide suitable land for the project. This contribution, worth \$600,000, has enabled the project to progress to the essential stage of project design and consultation with the supportive Mornington Shire. The project is further supported by the grant of \$250,000 from Rye and District Community Financial Services Ltd franchise of the Bendigo Bank. Parents too of the new residents have also made a financial commitment to this project by agreeing to provide a contribution of \$30,000 each to make this home a reality for their son or daughter. Nevertheless, the cost of building these new homes is close to \$3 million.

In preparation for a recent, and as yet incomplete submission process for Specialist Disability Accommodation Initiative (SDAI), CLA was also able to negotiate an agreed contribution of \$1 million from DHHS Victoria as matching funds should the SDAI submission be successful for funding. Unfortunately, if the funds are not forthcoming through the SDAI, the matching funds from DHHS will not be available and the project, creative and responsive in both design and intent, will not be able to proceed. Significant resourcing opportunities will be lost. If it does not proceed, the

future of both the individuals and their ageing carers remains both uncertain and frightening.

CLA understands the importance of leveraging every potential opportunity for funding future accommodation options. As an organisation, we believe that the Australian Government should promote opportunity for affordable and accessible housing options, and foster maximization of value via co-contributions, through annual budget allocation of funds to support urgently needed capital development. Additionally, CLA supports NDIS funding of creative technology solutions that reduce reliance on staff and provide the dignity of independence. CLA would also support the notion of a 'hardship' provision that enables the NDIS to fund capital contribution on behalf of an individual who would otherwise be unable to contribute to a residential support option if this was required to secure appropriate housing.

CLA is an organisation that currently receives no government funding support. Unlike funded organisations, CLA has achieved the development of this innovative partnership and project using their own scarce time and financial resources. When funding opportunities arise, CLA and other parent driven groups can offer unique perspectives and creative, cost-effective solutions, but are required to resource the preparation of funding submissions from their already limited means. Simplification of such processes could support more groups to offer their flexible, person-centred solutions and widen the options available to people with disabilities.

Government commitment to ensuring access to affordable, flexible, accessible and creative housing options through funding provision is crucial to the future of those living with a significant disability.

Marie Hell