



THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP

Minister for Families and Social Services

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

SUMMER FOUNDATION/YOUNGCARE

GET BUILDING SDA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

MARVEL STADIUM, 740 BOURKE STREET, DOCKLANDS, MELBOURNE

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***** check against delivery *****

I am pleased to be here to speak at this important conference.

I congratulate Summer Foundation and Youngcare for organising this event to discuss specialist disability accommodation - or SDA.

Your two organisations are powerful advocates for the importance of quality housing choices for people with complex disability support and housing needs.

But you are not just advocating - you are delivering.

In my view, the delivery of modern, well designed SDA, at an increasing rate, is one of the most powerful ways in which the NDIS is helping Australians with disability to live better lives - with more dignity, more self-determination, more engagement with the broader community and, quite simply, more joy in their lives.

Don't listen to me - listen to Liz, who I met recently on a visit to her new unit in Fairfield.

[Video of NDIS Participant Liz]

My name is Liz and I moved into my new apartment a month ago.

It's really exciting because it's the first time I have lived anywhere on my own and it's very very cool.

It's a home instead of someone's workplace with the NDIS in conjunction with other organisations to make this happen...It's so special.

[End of video]

So today I want to speak firstly about the progress we are making with SDA - including the changes announced recently; next to discuss our plan for younger people in residential aged care; and finally to report on how we are doing in delivering on the promise of the NDIS.

Let me start then with SDA.

We just heard from Liz, who lives in a recently completed SDA project, Greenwich - a partnership between Summer Housing, Grocon and Macquarie Bank.

It has ten fully accessible apartments plus one for support workers in a 77 unit building.

The model allows participants to share on-site supports in a more cost-effective way than group homes, while still allowing them to have privacy and independence.

When I met Liz, she was very clear about why she likes her new apartment.

She likes the autonomy and privacy - rather than the feeling of being in an institution, or being a guest in someone else's home.

She also likes the fact that in her complex there are some residents have a disability and many others do not. It makes her feel that she is more of a participant in our broader community - just through things like her neighbours saying good morning to her in the lift as everyone goes off to work.

This of course is why SDA is so important.

So it is a big part of the NDIS - in fact at full rollout we will spend nearly \$700 million a year in SDA payments to support close to 28,000 participants.

And I am pleased to say that SDA is gathering significant momentum.

Currently there are 10,975 participants with SDA funding in their plans, an increase of 58 per cent in the twelve months since December 31 2017.¹

¹ NDIS Quarterly Report to the COAG Disability Reform Council, 31 December 2018

The number of registered SDA providers has nearly doubled from 450 to 802 and the number of enrolled SDA dwellings increased from 1,135 to 2,593, a jump of nearly 130 per cent.²

In a research paper just released this month, the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute reports that SDA has attracted substantial interest amongst the property sector, large financial institutions, specialist financial institutions, community housing providers and disability service providers.³

This morning I am very pleased to also see the release of a new report from Social Ventures Australia and the Summer Foundation, which indicates that there are 1,518 SDA places in development around Australia, with activity particularly strong in NSW, Victoria and SA.

As the report notes, this is a solid start in the new SDA market.

In the interests of maintaining momentum, the Morrison Government has recently announced significant reforms to further encourage investment in SDA and increase choice and control for NDIS participants.

These reforms follow a comprehensive review of the SDA Pricing and Payments Framework last year, and have the support of all the states and territories.

Current barriers to SDA are being removed so that SDA funding can be placed in participants' plans sooner.

SDA Rules will no longer require participants to exhaust all other options before they can access SDA funding.

The changes mean that more SDA will be funded more quickly for those who need it and can be included in participants' plans even if a dwelling is not available.

This means participants can go out into the market and use their funding to find an SDA property from the market, or commission an SDA dwelling that meets their needs.

We will work to remove rules which restrict families from living together, allowing participants more choice and control in where they live and with whom they live.

² *Ibid*

³ *AHURI final report No 3 10 March 2019*

These reforms will also stimulate further construction and supply in the SDA market, remove barriers to investment and build market confidence.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) will only review the specific underlying assumptions within the pricing methodology every 5 years commencing in 2023 in consultation with a panel of independent experts skilled in pricing.

Each five yearly review will occur in the first half of the calendar year, with prices to take effect from 1 July of that year.

SDA prices will not change unexpectedly and can only be adjusted upwards if systemic, unexpected cost pressures emerge within any five yearly review of the pricing assumptions.

In line with this commitment the NDIA will undertake an immediate review of pricing assumptions to resolve issues that providers have told us may be creating unintentional disincentives for investment in particular regions or design categories.

The NDIA has already published the assumptions underlying prices in the 2018-19 SDA Price Guide, confirming that prices will be indexed each year to CPI.

The NDIA is also already in the process of rolling out further improvements which I will let Rob update you on.

We will bed down these reforms with the assistance of an SDA Reference Group, comprising participants, their representatives, providers, investors and other relevant stakeholders.

The SDA Reference Group will provide input on policy and price settings and support the development of the SDA market.

Last Friday we announced the members of the SDA Reference Group, many or all of whom are in this room today.

I am sure the group will to represent the breadth of interests and ideas in making the SDA market grow.

There is one group of Australians for whom our SDA changes are particularly important - younger people in residential aged care.

As we all recognise, the aged care system is designed to support the needs of older people. It is not designed or necessarily well-equipped to meet all of the needs a younger person with disability may have.

It is unacceptable that nearly 6,000 younger people - almost 200 under the age of 45 - live in residential age care facilities when many of them should not need to.

During the 2017-18 financial year, around 50 younger people a week were admitted to aged care.

The Summer Foundation website gives explicit examples of how unacceptable this is.

“My sense of place in the world was gone” One young man said of his experience in an aged care home.

One way we are responding to this issue is through the Royal Commission into Quality and Safety of Aged Care. It has a specific term of reference to look at the issue of younger people with disability living in aged care.

But we are determined to get action under way now - and to set out a clear direction for the future.

That is why today, I am announcing the launch of our National Action Plan for Younger People in Residential Aged Care.

With the improvements to SDA and the NDIS Complex Support Needs Pathway, we have the tools to act.

Today, we are committing to three specific goals - and we will use those tools to meet them.

First, to those with disability aged 45 and under who are living in residential aged care today and wish to get out - I say that we will commit to get that done by the end of 2022. Our commitment is that if you wish to leave, you will have alternative, age-appropriate housing and supports by 2022 at the latest.

Secondly, to those aged between 46 and 65 who are living in residential aged care today and wish to get out - we will commit to that being done by 2025.

While our immediate focus is on those aged under 45, this will not preclude or prevent the actions we are taking to immediately benefit all younger people under 65 years - we will not wait until 2022 to assist you.

Thirdly, by 2025 we will halve the number of people with a disability under the age of 65 entering aged care, compared to today.

But we will not stop there. Beyond 2025, we will continue our work to minimise to the fullest extent possible the number of younger people under 65 years of age entering and living in aged care.

These are ambitious goals. They can only be achieved if everybody works together. That means people with disability, their families, carers and supporters.

It means the Australian and state and territory Governments.

It means providers and investors in the SDA market.

The NDIS cannot achieve this on its own.

But with the goodwill and co-operation of all stakeholders - and building on the reforms to SDA we have recently announced - I believe these goals are realistic and achievable.

We will take action to enable

- faster access to better planning and integrated support;
- improved process and pathways from hospital; and
- as already discussed - the development of the SDA market.

The number of younger people being admitted to aged care from hospital will be reduced by earlier and better NDIS planning, stronger relationships and more information sharing between support coordinators, hospital discharge planners and Aged Care Assessment Teams.

By July this year the Complex Support Needs Pathway will give all NDIS participants in aged care, or currently in hospital, access to:

- appropriate planning decisions;
- better engagement with support coordinators and the SDA sector;
- planning discussions tailored to explore and confirm housing and support goals; and
- assessments and approvals for assistive technology and home modifications.

Before I move on, I would especially like to thank my colleague, the Assistant Minister for Social Services, Housing and Disability Services, Sarah Henderson, who unfortunately is unable to join us today.

Not only is she a dedicated and hardworking representative for her local community in Corangamite, she has been a steadfast and passionate advocate for the rights of people with disability to live in age appropriate housing, and it is her advocacy within the Morrison Government that has led us here today.

I have spoken about two important aspects of the NDIS - SDA and younger people in residential aged care.

Let me turn in the final part of my speech to put these into the broader context - of how we are doing in delivering on the promise of the NDIS.

As of January this year, more than 250,000 Australians were receiving support under the NDIS, including some 78,000 people receiving life-changing support for the first time.

The NDIS is now available to all people with disability across NSW, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory and the ACT, with the rollout continuing in WA.

In the last six months, Assistant Minister Sarah Henderson and I have announced significant improvements to better support NDIS participants, their families and carers, including:

- the rollout of a new participant pathway, with face-to-face planning (where preferred), a single point of contact, easier to read plans, a new NDIS website and improved training for NDIA staff;
- a psychosocial disabilities stream, with specialised planners and closer linkages with mental health services;
- better planning and pricing for NDIS participants with complex needs;
- the establishment of the NDIS Participant Employment Taskforce to improve employment outcomes for NDIS participants;
- laying the groundwork for a new national investment strategy for Information, Linkages and Capacity Building; and
- new and simplified processes for accessing assistive technology.

At the same time, we are continuing to rollout the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to ensure that NDIS participants, their families and carers can be assured that the services they receive keep them free from harm.

None of this would have been possible without the contribution of people with disability, their families, carers and supporters, in providing us with feedback and working with us to identify solutions.

It would not have been possible without the commitment of a refreshed NDIA Board and executive management that bring a breadth of personal and professional experiences from a range of industries and backgrounds.

It would not have been possible without the dedication of the not-for-profit sector, sole traders, businesses large and small, and the broader community who are all playing a roll in making the NDIS a success.

But we are not finished yet.

Our Liberal National Government is committed to making the NDIS deliver for people with disability, their families, carers and supporters.

We are acutely aware that if we want to truly deliver individual choice and control for people with disability we need to support the growth of the NDIS market and workforce.

We will work with all interested parties in the private and not-for-profit sectors, as well as members of the broader community to make the NDIS a success.

The NDIS is one of the largest job creation opportunities in Australia's history, with up to an additional 90,000 full time equivalent workers needed across the country over the next five years.

We are supporting the growth of the NDIS market and workforce, including investing over \$45 million through the Jobs and Market Fund to improve the capacity and capability of the sector to meet the needs of NDIS participants.

In the days and weeks ahead, I will be making further significant announcements to enable the sector to plan ahead with confidence and support them to deliver the innovative services that NDIS participants will require into the future.

I would like to close with an important observation from another young person.

In an open letter on age appropriate housing that she wrote to the Prime Minister, Jamie-Lee Dwyer, who has a rare neuro-degenerative condition, said:

Just because I have a condition that's beyond my control I don't think I should have to give up my independence, privacy, or relinquish my dignity.

She went on to say that in her experience it is the little things like choice and privacy that make a real difference to the outlook of a person with a high-needs disability.

Providing choice, and the privacy of a home of their own, is an important element of Specialist Disability Accommodation.

The Government's recent reforms to SDA and the release of our National Action Plan for Younger People in Residential Aged Care are proof positive of our commitment to providing the best possible supports for people with disability.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you in this room, and many others like you across the country, who share this commitment.

There is always further to go, but our combined endeavours are achieving some great results.