

Joint Statement

Separation of housing and care support providers

With the release of both the Disability Royal Commission Final Report and the NDIS Review Final Report – Australia is presented with a momentous opportunity to ensure people with disability can genuinely exercise choice and control over the provision of their housing and supports.

Mandating the separation of the provision housing and support is fundamental to ensuring people with disability are afforded appropriate protections from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Why should housing and care support providers be separated?

The risk of abuse and neglect is heightened for a person with disability whose supports and services are provided by a single service provider – as evidenced by both the Disability Royal Commission Final Report and the NDIS Review Final Report.

A model of supported accommodation predicated on a single service provider does not offer a strong safeguarding approach. When a participant receives services from a range of different service providers, this means more individuals are enabled to monitor the person's safety and wellbeing. For those participants who are isolated and vulnerable, this action alone can provide an important element of risk mitigation and additional points of potential intervention. In addition, this increases the likelihood of incidences being reported to the appropriate authorities such as the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

Linking services and housing also heightens the risk of financial exploitation of people with disability, and the risk of a person needing to move homes in the event they are unhappy with their support provider. Further, it potentially impedes on a person's ability to exert choice and control – a fundamental principle of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

A safe model of supported accommodation

We welcome the Disability Royal Commission Final Report Recommendation 7.41 Group home reform which calls for a number of things including for the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to prioritise the implementation of the Own Motion Inquiry into Aspects of Supported Accommodation – Action Plan and expand actions to include: a specific review of mechanisms to transition away from allowing the same provider to provide Supported Independent Living and Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) services, with interim arrangements to strengthen oversight to address and monitor conflicts of interest.

In line with implementing Disability Royal Commission Final Report Recommendation 7.41 Group home reform, we recommend the following:

- Mandating the *full* separation of entities providing housing and care supports services for NDIS participants with extreme functional impairment and/or high support needs (beyond simply separation of Supported Independent Living and SDA).
- We note there ought to be exceptions, for example, for remote/very remote locations and SDA self-providers that choose to self-manage their in-home care supports.

To this end, we strongly recommend the Australian Government accept and consequently act upon:

- Action 9.7 of the NDIS Review which calls for the new National Disability Supports Quality and Safeguards Commission to strengthen SDA regulation to ensure dwellings are managed in accordance with the needs of participants and mandate the separation of SDA and living support providers.

Further, ensuring the separation of support coordination from any other type of support is critical to ensuring the principle of choice and control for people with disability is upheld, and the avoidance of conflicts of interest on the part of service providers. We therefore urge the Australian government to fully support Disability Royal Commission Final Report Recommendation 10.2: Independent support coordination.

This statement is supported by:

- **People with Disability Australia:** Australia's peak cross-disability Disability Representative Organisation and is funded by the Australian Government to represent the 1 in 6 Australians with disability nationally. Our organisation is made up of, and led by, people with disability.
- **DANA:** the national representative body for a network of independent disability advocacy organisations throughout Australia. DANA's vision is of a nation that includes and values people with disabilities and respects human rights for all.
- **SDA Alliance:** a peak body representing sixty-eight SDA market players (including SDA providers, institutional investors, developers, builders and allied health professionals) across Australia.