



The contents of this document are OFFICIAL

# Reference Group meeting bulletin – 9 November 2023

## Home and Living Reference Group

The [Home and Living Reference Group](#), known as the Reference Group, recently met via videoconference on 9 November 2023. This bulletin provides an overview of the meeting.

The Reference Group focuses on home and living supports for people with disability. They share their knowledge with the Independent Advisory Council (IAC). The IAC uses this information to give advice to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Board on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

[Ms Leah van Poppel](#), IAC Principal Member, led the meeting.

## From the Principal Member and Reference Group Co-chair

Ms van Poppel thanked members for coming and welcomed Ms Samantha Jenkinson, the IAC's new Senior Independent Advisor. She will be responsible for supporting the development of the IAC's advice for the NDIA Board.

Ms Van Poppel acknowledged that the IAC are waiting for the appointments of 6 IAC member vacancies to be resolved through government decision-making process. Ms van Poppel will appoint a Co-chair to this Reference Group once IAC membership has been confirmed.

Ms van Poppel highlighted work the Reference Group have done since their last meeting on [18 September 2023 \(DOCX 91KB\)](#), including work to develop their Work Plan for the next 18 months.

## What members have heard in their community

Reference Group members told us things the NDIA needs to know, related to:

## NDIS access and planning

- Concern that older participants are encouraged to leave the NDIS when they start experiencing age-related health issues.
- There has been positive feedback about the increase in face-to-face planning meetings.
- Calls for a greater focus on social connection in conversations about home and living supports.
- Reports that delays in home and living decisions are impacting participants whose circumstances change.
- Reports that people with disability in remote communities may not apply for the NDIS because there are limited providers in their area.

## NDIS service and supports

- Concern that [operating guidelines](#) provide unclear information about [Specialist Disability Accommodation \(SDA\)](#).
- Reports that some families with children approaching the upper age limit of the [early childhood approach](#) are not well supported to understand the process required for eligibility assessment for the NDIS.
- Reports that people who live alone at times may feel pressured by NDIA staff to share their home.
- Recommendations for core and cluster style housing for people with psychosocial disability as a cost-effective way to support their independence. This is housing with fully independent living quarters with private bathroom and kitchen facilities.
- Reports that some people with intellectual disability feel unsafe in [Supported Independent Living \(SIL\)](#) accommodation. Calls for more support to help these people decide where they live and who they live with.

## Providers

- Reports that some providers build accessible housing where it suits them, which can make it hard for people with disability to find a home somewhere close to their family and community.
- Reports that the NDIS' rules, which limit how providers can promote SDA vacancies, can make it difficult for providers to find tenants.
- Reports that some providers don't allow participants to use other providers as part of their SDA supports. These people also say their providers monitor their visitors, which creates a feeling of unease.
- Concern that some participants' choice and control over who they live with in SDA is limited.

## Community and other government services

- Reports that some people with disability who leave the justice system have difficulty finding a home that meets their needs. This may contribute to them reoffending.
- Calls for the NDIA to work with the health system to find solutions for people in palliative care needing disability support.
- Calls for the NDIA to advocate for improvements to [Special Disability Trusts](#) so the [legislation](#) better reflects the current cost of accessible housing.
- Reports that some state guardians continue to make decisions without including the person with disability.

## Update on NDIA home and living decisions

Mr Ed Duncan, NDIA Branch Manager of Operations and Housing Support, shared work the NDIA have been doing to improve home and living decisions. Members highlighted:

- Feedback from older NDIS participants that plans for those aged over 65 are usually written the same as each other and do not account for a person's unique needs.
- Concern about reports that some NDIA staff recommend older NDIS participants move to aged care.
- The disability and aged care sectors should work together to understand the impact of age on a person's disability and needs.
- People with disability should be able to live in their own home for as long as possible.
- Some people with disability need help to use their home and living supports, especially to understand the recent [price changes to SDA](#).
- The NDIA is not always meeting the [Participant Service Guarantee](#) on home and living decisions. The Agency needs to support participants at each stage of the home and living decision making process.
- Some participants feel unheard in the home and living decision making process and would like decision makers to better consider their needs alongside evidence from health professionals.

## NDIA co-design, Reform for outcomes

IAC representatives shared their work on the NDIA's [Reform for outcomes co-design activities](#). Dr George Taleporos, IAC Member, shared information on independent living and Mr Gavin Burner, Intellectual Disability Reference Group Member, shared information on better planning.

Members shared the following insights on the co-design work on independent living:

- 'Market' may not be the best word to describe the work of providers. The use of this term could encourage providers to view people with disability as opportunities to make money.
- People with disability should have choice and control to live where they want, and providers should support this.



- The NDIA should help people with disability who have unsuitable housing find a better place to live.
- Positive community sentiment about the NDIS Review's discussion of creating a home and living navigator role. However, members warn that conflicts of interest will need to be controlled.

Members shared the following thoughts on the co-design work about better planning:

- Encouraging the use of planners who have specialised knowledge or experience of a type of disability and who are not [Local Area Coordinators \(LACs\)](#).
- Planners need more training that includes the lived experience of people with disability.
- Fostering a planning process that listens to and values the participant's support needs, including the need for flexibility in their plans.
- Planning meetings should happen in the participant's natural setting. Meetings should include a conversation where the planner helps the participant uncover their needs.
- Supported decision making takes time, which is why longer planning meetings would be better.
- All information for participants, especially their NDIS plans, should be offered in accessible and/or Easy Read formats that promote better understanding.
- The NDIS should have more support and information on self-management and how to use plans.
- Calls from participants to have a direct and regular way to contact their planner.

## More information on the Reference Group

The Home and Living Reference Group will next meet in 2024. For additional details about Reference Group meetings and bulletins, visit [the IAC website](#). You can also access [IAC advice here](#).

**An Easy Read version of the bulletin is also available, as part of the IAC's commitment to accessibility.**