# Governments take action to increase Specialist Disability Accommodation



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The Federal Government has announced immediate reforms to boost Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) for eligible National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants.

Minister for Families and Social Services, Paul Fletcher, and Assistant Minister for Social Services, Housing and Disability Services, Sarah Henderson, announced the changes today.

When the NDIS is fully rolled out, it is expected that almost $700m in SDA payments will be made each year to support almost 28,000 participants requiring a specialist housing solution.

Speaking at the opening of a new SDA development by community housing organisation, Summer Housing in Fairfield in Victoria, Mr Fletcher said the reforms address the outcomes of a review into SDA by the Council of Australian Governments Disability Reform Council, completed in December 2018.

“The Government is introducing immediate changes to improve choice and control for eligible NDIS participants, build market confidence and drive stronger investment in Specialist Disability Accommodation,” Mr Fletcher said.

“These reforms will stimulate construction and supply of SDA properties, creating more diverse accommodation options for NDIS participants.”

The purpose-designed Summer Housing property unveiled today is the first to be developed under a NDIS pilot project which will be rolled out nationally to enable NDIS participants with specialist housing needs to access a home faster.

Mr Fletcher said for the first time SDA will be included in participants plans up front, so participants, their carers or families can go into the market and find or commission a home that suits their individual needs.

“The Federal Government is committed to removing barriers to investment, increasing market information and providing greater pricing certainty to investors in this crucial early stage of the SDA market.

“SDA prices will not change unexpectedly and can be adjusted up if systemic cost pressures emerge. SDA properties under construction will be able to be pre-certified to give investors more certainty that their property will meet SDA design standards on completion.

“Summer Housing is one of around 750 current providers of Specialist Disability Accommodation which will benefit from the changes to drive greater investment.”

Assistant Minister for Social Services, Housing and Disability Services, Sarah Henderson, said the Government is committed to increasing participants’ choice and control in their SDA living arrangements.

“The Government is also working towards removing restrictions by July 2019 in the SDA Rules that currently prevent some families from living together.

“This will give participants more flexibility to live where they want and with whom they want,” Ms Henderson said.

Chief Executive Officer of YoungCare, Anthony Ryan, welcomed today’s announcement.

“By restoring confidence in the Specialist Disability Accommodation market, we should now see a more optimistic environment which will allow for bespoke housing solutions for young people with high care needs,” Mr Ryan said.

CEO of the Summer Foundation, Luke Bo’sher, said the changes were great news for the SDA sector:

“The 50 younger people each week who enter aged care will benefit from this fast-track process to get the NDIS funding they need to avoid an inappropriate admission to a nursing home,” Mr Bosher said.

“These changes create confidence across the affordable housing and finance sectors to scale up their efforts to create Specialist Disability Accommodation. These changes go a long way towards the vision of an NDIS that enables people with disability to live in high quality, accessible housing integrated in communities across Australia.”

The Department of Social Services (DSS) and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) will engage with stakeholders to provide input on immediate implementation of the changes.

The NDIA is establishing an SDA Reference Group, representing participants, providers, investors and other key stakeholders, to support the development of the SDA market, and the long-term viability of SDA investments to improve choice and control for participants. The NDIA will immediately release the terms of reference and call for expressions of interest for individuals and organisations to participate.

The full report from the SDA review and the Disability Reform Council response and the revised SDA Pricing and Payments Framework is available on the DSS website (external) . The updated SDA Price Guide is now available.

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