

A home to lay your head – Addressing the housing crisis for people with disability in Australia

October 2022

Sam is a 46-year-old small business owner with two school-aged children. In January 2021, she had a stroke. After a year, she remained in the hospital because she could not get around her rented home in a wheelchair. Sam was at risk of being moved into an aged care facility.

She had applied to the National Disability Insurance Agency for support to move out of the hospital and into an accessible home. Unfortunately, the application had not been approved eight months after it had been submitted. While in the hospital, Sam could not do everyday things such as cooking a meal, going out with family or being a part of her social networks. As a result, she was losing her confidence, independence, and rehabilitation gains.

A case study from the Summer Foundation, January 2022

There are thousands of people with disability currently waiting for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding for housing and supports. The Down to 10 Days is a campaign with the objective of getting NDIS participants the housing and support they need when needed. The Synod of Victoria and Tasmania actively supports the Down to 10 Days campaign.

The delays in access to Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) and supported decision-making pose severe risks to the health and well-being of NDIS participants.

Minister Shorten announced on 14 September 2022 that he would aim to [speed up hospital discharge for NDIS participants](#). "At the moment, there's too many NDIS participants stuck in hospital who are medically ready to be discharged, which is creating poor outcomes for participants and adding strain on hospitals across the country", Minister Shorten said.

Of over 2,000 people on the NDIS in hospital, over half are medically ready for discharge but lack an appropriate support system and accommodation. Around 30% of those in a hospital are waiting for the NDIA to process their application for support. Another 20% are trying to find housing. However, lack of disability housing is not the main barrier to hospital discharge. The NDIA reported there were 3,000 vacancies in disability housing across Australia. The processing time of the NDIA for accommodation applications appears to be the main barrier to getting people with a disability into housing. However, Minister Shorten has expressed concern that there may be an "insufficient" stock of disability housing in Tasmania and regional Australia.

Minister Shorten committed to the NDIA contacting NDIS participants within four days of the NDIA being notified of the person's admission. He also stated he would aim to ensure the NDIA approved a discharge plan within 30 days, down from the current average of 80 days.

On 25 September 2022, the Victorian Government announced a \$39 million *Pathways to Home* program to assist people with a disability transition home once they are medically fit for discharge from a hospital. The average delay in the release from a hospital for a person with a disability in Victoria has been five months. However, some spend up to 20 months waiting for discharge. The delays have meant that on any day, between 100 and 300 people with a disability have languished in a Victorian hospital bed despite being ready for discharge.

People who have been waiting for more than two years are starting to see fair decisions about housing and support. Yet, there is still much to do.

Down to 10 days



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

downto10days.org.au

Nearly 4,000 people under the age of 65 live in aged care facilities. Minister Shorten has promised to address the issue, stating, "The Labor Government is committed to reducing the number of young people living in aged care."

Previous attempts by the Commonwealth Government to address the problem were not adequately resourced. In 2020, a strategy was released by the Commonwealth Government with targets of:

- No people under the age of 65 entering residential aged care by 2022;
- No people under the age of 45 living in residential aged care by 2022; and
- No people under the age of 65 living in residential aged care by 2025.

The second target has not been met. We must ensure that future plans to tackle the problem are appropriately resourced and implemented.

As a member of the Down to 10 Days alliance, we need your support. There are close to 150 organisations that are backing the campaign, and together we can drive reform. We ask that you write to Minister Shorten reiterating that the alliance seeks a commitment from the Commonwealth Government for faster, more accurate decisions on housing and supports for people with a disability.

What You Can Do

Write polite and respectful letters to:

The Hon Bill Shorten MP

Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

Points to make in your letters:

- Thank the Minister for his commitment to reforming the NDIA to benefit people with a disability.
- Express concern about people with a disability stuck in hospital beds despite being medically fit to be discharged.
- Also, express concern about people under the age of 65 stuck in aged care facilities.
- Ask that he enable the NDIA to make housing and support decisions within ten days from the application by the person with a disability.
- Ask that the Government commit to working with the NDIA to redesign the support and Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) decision process to achieve the ten-day target for:
 - NDIS participants in hospital;
 - New NDIS participants with catastrophic injuries;
 - Young people with a disability who are at risk of entering residential aged care; and
 - NDIS participants in precarious living situations.
- Ask that all other requests for SDA and support be included in the 50-day complex planning timeframe committed to in the Participant Service Guarantee.

Acknowledgement: The Justice and International Mission Cluster would like to thank the Summer Foundation for assisting with the above action. The Summer Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation established in 2006 to resolve the issue of people under the age of 65 being kept in aged care facilities.