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To Whom It May Concern

### **Accommodation for people with disabilities and the NDIS**

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) welcomes the opportunity to write a submission on the issue of accommodation for people with disabilities and the NDIS.

Recent APS engagement on issues relating to people with disabilities includes several submissions regarding the NDIS (including the draft Quality and Safeguarding Framework), adequacy of residential aged care for young people, as well as development of a practice guide aimed at reducing the need for restrictive practices in the disability sector.

The APS is not in a position to respond extensively to this Inquiry, nor specifically address possible solutions, innovations, pilot programs and possible funding models. However, this submission does draw on the available evidence to highlight the key principles for consideration in thinking about such solutions and models in order to enhance individual and community-wide mental health and wellbeing.

Housing is a fundamental human right and essential to the maintenance of human dignity. Every Australian has the right to adequate, safe and affordable housing. From a psychological perspective, adequate safe and secure housing (tenure) provides a foundation for individuals and families to develop a sense of identity and belonging. It is essential to both individual and community wellbeing. By contrast, not having a stable base (or home), denies people their fundamental human right to shelter and safety, disrupts the connections they have with their family and communities and is associated with a sense of social exclusion and poor mental health and wellbeing.

The APS understands adequate accommodation to be that which promotes good quality of life and wellbeing. As such, regardless of where a person lives, people should be enabled to achieve emotional, physical and material wellbeing as well as having opportunities for interpersonal relations, personal development, self-determination, and social inclusion.

As highlighted in our 2015 submission to the *Inquiry into adequacy of residential care arrangements for young people with severe disabilities*, more diverse and client-centred accommodation models are emerging, particularly in response to changes in

the disability service system. However group homes are likely to remain central for those with severe intellectual disability.

In relation to residential accommodation, it is clear that considerable resources are required to meet the needs of residents regardless of the model. The primary considerations for finding suitable accommodation include:

- Ensuring adequate training levels and skill levels of care and rehabilitation staff
- Ensuring 24-hour care is available for residents
- Provision of individualised rehabilitation programs, equipment, and facilities
- Adequate connection with family, friends and the community (YPINH, 2010).

Safety is also a critical issue. This was highlighted in the APS submission about the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework. In the context of housing, it is essential that mechanisms are in place to ensure safety and quality issues are addressed. This includes housing design, location (low crime area, close to transport options), and workforce issues (in the case of residential accommodation).

If housing is affordable, suitable and secure, then it is likely that health will be optimised. In a report on disability and inequality, VicHealth (2012) highlighted the known link between appropriate housing and health. The fact that people with disabilities are disadvantaged in the housing market makes them particularly vulnerable to the deleterious health effects of inappropriate accommodation.

Moreover, housing needs to be regarded as more than a human health need; it is crucial to recognise the importance of place and the potential of the built environment to facilitate positive and creative lives (Muenchberger et al., 2012). Place is a key determinant of psychological wellbeing, yet often provision of support is given precedence over the role of the built environment for people with disabilities. Key principles that may be utilised to guide future supported accommodation design relate not only to the built environment, but also the natural, symbolic and social environments. While Muenchberger and colleagues' research is focused on young adults with complex disabilities in residential care, the principles can be applied to accommodation for all people with disabilities.

Well-designed and located housing can deliver additional benefits in terms of economic participation, social inclusion, health and wellbeing (Wiesel & Habibis, 2015). Ultimately, accommodation for people with disabilities requires a creative and human response (Muenchberger et al., 2011) – "it's about what it means to be human, as well as what it means to be housed" (Muenchberger et al., 2012, p.2157).

The NDIS will go some way to addressing these needs, however, adequate accommodation cannot be the sole responsibility of the NDIS; rather, a collaborative effort with the aged care, health and housing sectors is vital. This highlights the need for more policy clarity about the roles of Commonwealth and State governments in providing housing assistance for NDIS participants (Wiesel & Habibis, 2015).

Specifically, there is a need for more accessible and affordable accommodation options, which will enable people with disability to make choices and ultimately have more control. At full rollout of the scheme in 2019, it has been estimated that between 83 000–122,000 NDIS participants will have unmet affordable housing needs (Wiesel & Habibis, 2015). State and local governments could play a role here by ensuring that state and local planning bodies require developers to allocate a percentage of any new developments for social housing as part of the planning approval process.

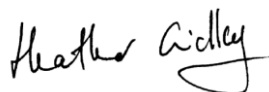
Accommodation options for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities, and in particular individualised supported living arrangements, are currently the subject of a Commonwealth-funded ARC Linkage research project involving Curtin University (Professor Cocks), The University of Sydney (Professor O'Brien), and The University of Melbourne (Professor McVilly). The project involves a 3-year investigation, including the validation of a quality assurance framework and outcomes measure. Data are currently being gathered across three states. Preliminary findings will be available later this year.

Both the Homeshare and Keyring models are promising initiatives which have the potential to boost both housing affordability and quality of life. The Homeshare model seeks to bring together people with disability with other community members into a mutually beneficial shared housing arrangement, whereby accommodation is often exchanged for support. For details of potential applications of the Homeshare model within the NDIS see <http://www.homeshare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Homeshare-and-NDIS-April-14.pdf>. The Keyring model, which originated in the UK, connects small groups of people with disabilities living within the same vicinity to each other, supporting them to live independently in the community.

In summary, the APS recommends more opportunities for affordable and accessible housing to be made available within the framework of the NDIS, in co-operation with all levels of government.

For further information please contact me on 03 8662 3327.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heather Gridley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ms Heather Gridley FAPS  
Manager, Public Interest  
Australian Psychological Society

## References

- Muenchberger, H., Sunderland, N., Kendall, E. & Quinn, H. (2011). A long way to Tipperary? Young people with complex health conditions living in residential aged care: a metaphorical map for understanding the call for change. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 33(13-14): 1190-1202.
- Muenchberger, H., Ehrlich, C., Kendall, E., Vit, M. (2012). Experience of place for young adults under 65 years with complex disabilities moving into purpose-built residential care. *Social Science & Medicine*, 75, 2151-59.
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- YPINH Consortium (2010). Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability Care and Support. <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/disability-support/submissions/sub0321.pdf>

## **About the Australian Psychological Society**

The APS is the premier professional association for psychologists in Australia, representing more than 22,000 members. Psychology is a discipline that systematically addresses the many facets of human experience and functioning at individual, family and societal levels. Psychology covers many highly specialised areas, but all psychologists share foundational training in human development and the constructs of healthy functioning.

A key goal of the APS is to actively contribute psychological knowledge for the promotion and enhancement of community wellbeing. Psychologists apply their skills and knowledge to enhance understandings of the individual, family and systemic issues that contribute to social problems, and to find better ways of addressing such problems. Psychology in the Public Interest is the section of the APS dedicated to the application and communication of psychological knowledge to enhance community wellbeing and promote equitable and just treatment of all segments of society.

Many psychologists work with people with disability in their everyday work across a range of settings including schools, hospitals and in private practice. Psychologists have much to offer people with disability, including the provision of interventions such as specialised assessment, mental health intervention, skills training, pain management, positive behaviour support, communication techniques, and environmental strategies. There is strong evidence supporting the benefits of psychological interventions in autism and intellectual disability, the two most prominent diagnoses amongst participants in the NDIS thus far (Matthews, InPsych, 2014).

## **APS submissions and resources relating to disability**

Victorian Family and Community Development Committee Inquiry into Abuse in Disability Services (Stage 2) – October 2015 -

<http://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/2015-APS-Submission-%20Victorian-State-Inquiry-Abuse-Disability-Services-Oct.pdf>

Inquiry into the adequacy of existing residential care arrangements for young people with severe physical, mental or intellectual disabilities in Australia – Feb 2015 -

<http://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/2015-APS-Submission-into-the-adequacy-of-residential-care-arrangements-for-young-people-with-disabilities.pdf>

Response to the National Disability Insurance Scheme Public Consultation Paper - April 2015 - <https://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/2015-APSSubmission-Response-NDIS-April.pdf>

Forming a National Disability Workforce Strategy: National Disability Services Discussion Paper (April 2014) - May 2014 -

[https://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/2014-APS\\_Submission\\_NDS\\_Discussion%20Paper\\_May%202014.pdf](https://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/2014-APS_Submission_NDS_Discussion%20Paper_May%202014.pdf)

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee National Disability Insurance Scheme Bill 2012 – Jan 2013 - <https://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/2013-NDIS-Nationa-Disability-Insurance-January.pdf> -

National Disability Insurance Scheme Rules Consultation Paper – Jan 2013 - <https://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/2013-APS-Submission-to-NDIS-Rules.pdf>

Australian Psychological Society (2011). Evidence-based guidelines to reduce the need for restrictive practices in the disability sector. Available at <https://www.psychology.org.au/practitioner/resources/restrictive/>

The development of the Practice Guide was the genesis for the establishment of an *APS Interest Group on People with Intellectual and Developmental Disability and Psychology*. The Interest Group was established to formally oversee the implementation of the Practice Guide and provide a national forum for promotion of psychological interventions to enhance the lives of people with disability. Morag Budiselik is the current Convenor of the Interest Group and more information can be gathered from the APS website ([www.groups.psychology.org.au/piddp/](http://www.groups.psychology.org.au/piddp/)).

### ***InPsych (bimonthly bulletin)***

The opportunities and challenges of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Rebecca Matthews, Aug 2014) - <https://www.psychology.org.au/inpsych/2014/august/ndis/>

Guidelines for interventions that reduce the need for restrictive practices in the disability sector (Harry Lovelock, Dec 2009) - [https://www.psychology.org.au/inpsych/guidelines\\_diability/](https://www.psychology.org.au/inpsych/guidelines_diability/)