

Supported Accommodation Consultation Report

Submission from the South Australian Council on
Intellectual Disability for the NDIS Quality and Safeguards
Commission *Own Motion Inquiry* into Aspects of
Supported Accommodation

Submitted 31 October 2022

Working
towards
an inclusive
South
Australian
community

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South Australian Council
on Intellectual Disability

www.sacid.com.au

Organisational Overview

The South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability Incorporated (SACID) is a state-wide not for profit organisation. SACID was founded in 2006 with a mission to work towards achieving a South Australian community in which people with intellectual disability are involved and accepted as equal participating members. This is achieved through consultation with stakeholders, advocating for an inclusive community, promoting the rights of people with intellectual disability and delivering capacity building activities for people with intellectual disability and their families. SACID also work with professionals and organisations to improve their awareness of intellectual disability and implement inclusive services. SACID are leaders in co-design and inclusive practice. All of the work we do is guided by people with intellectual disability and their families.

Proposed Scope of Work

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission is currently undertaking an *Own Motion Inquiry* into aspects of supported accommodation. As part of this Inquiry, the NDIS Commission is seeking to consult with people with intellectual disability and their supporters and have engaged organisations who are connected with people with intellectual disability and their supporters. SACID has facilitated consultations with people with intellectual disability who live in supported accommodation and their supporters.

Preparation for Consultation

SACID worked with the NDIS Commission, New South Wales Council of Intellectual Disability (CID) and Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALID) to develop questions for the consultation. The questions included:

- What is the best thing about your life?
- What is the best thing about your home?
- What are the things you need help with in your home?
- Something you do not like or something you would change in your home?
- Who supports you to make decisions about where you live?
- How much choice do you have with the things that happen at home?
- If you are not happy with where you are living or the supports you are getting, who can you go to for help?
- If you could choose a dream home, what would it look like?
- Which right is the most important to you about your home (list of rights)

The questions were developed in Plain English to ensure we got the best response from the cohort of people we consulted with.

SACID approach 6 participants to participate in a 1:1 interview during the month of October 2022, to talk about their experiences, or the experiences of their family members, of living in supported accommodation. Interviews were conducted face to face and online via TEAMS. The cohort interviewed comprised of:

- 3 people living in supported accommodation (between 20 – 50 years of age),
- 1 family member who has a child currently residing in an Exceptional Needs Unit (ENU), looking into supported accommodation for the future,
- 1 family member who has a sibling living in supported accommodation,
- 1 person who is in the process of moving into supported accommodation.

Our initial proposal was to facilitate a focus group, however, due to the participants' different experiences of supported accommodation; to ensure everyone had a chance to speak and share their story, a 1:1 interview was the best approach. Participants were reimbursed for their time participating in the consultation.

It important to note the limitations of this consultation. The small sample size provides a limited view of participants experiences in support accommodation settings and may not reflect the experience of others.

Consultation Report

What is the best thing about your life?

From the discussion with each participant, independence and being able to do things freely when they want, and having their own home and environment was strongly spoken about. The most common response from the participants about the best thing in their life is:

- Their social life and having a big network of friends,
- Having a job and going to work (similar response both from people who work in open employment and within an Australian Disability Enterprise),
- Seeing family,
- Having independence and living independently,
- Living with their partner,
- Doing social activities (such as bowling, going to concerts, dancing).

What is the best thing about your home?

The best thing about the participants' home were:

- They had their own space,
- They like the housemates they lived with,
- The staff interaction,
- Living independently,
- It is their home.

Independence was the most common theme amongst the participants when talking about the best thing about their home, with strong staff support as the second most common response.

One participant who is in the process of moving into supported accommodation commented that they like being on their own, but it can get lonely. 'I would love to live with my friends. I love my independence and having my own space'.

One of the participants who lives in supported accommodation said, 'even though I live with other people, I have my own space and independence. I love the area I am living in, and I know the people in my community'.

Another participant who lives in supported accommodation, but has their own apartment said, 'my home is mine, I like the space. I can come and go as I please. I can put up pictures and posters around my house of things I like. I can have pets and I look after them. I have my own room. I have my own key. I can access things that are not locked away.... I don't have people telling me what to do'.

One of the family members who has a child living in ENU said the best thing they believe their child likes about living in ENU is that they have 'beautiful staff in their life who cares about them. They focus on [child] and go out of their way to support them'. When asked what the family member thought was the best thing, they said having to 'relearn how to be a mum and I am able to now be there with [child] in the moment and can have the additional tasks – I can hand them on. I get to be with [child] and let them take the lead'.

What are the things you need help within your home?

The participants who live in group homes had similar responses in terms of the things they need help with at home. This included:

- Paying bills,

- Filling out forms,
- Budgeting,
- Transport,
- Cooking,
- Personal care support,
- Big cleaning jobs (e.g., mopping and vacuuming),
- Medication support,
- Shopping,
- Making and going to appointments,
- Keeping the home clean and safe,
- Making hard and big decisions.

Both family members of people with intellectual disability also commented that their person needed support to keep safe in their home. These were for:

- Support with emotional regulation and keeping the environment safe by 'removing obstacles' and keeping the person safe when behaviours of concern occur.
- Support with health and mobility risks.

When asked if the participants felt like they get all the help in their home that they needed, there was a mixed response. The participants who live in supported accommodation all commented that they do have enough support and that their staff are always there to help them when they need it.

One participant commented, 'yes, if I need help, I will talk to staff. Sometimes when I have asked for help, staff don't always come straight away. It makes me feel a little bit upset and frustrated. I like it when staff give me set times when they will come and help so then I know when they are free and when to expect them'.

The participant who is moving into supported accommodation commented that they would like more support to be more independent. They are also looking forward to and excited about moving into a group home.

When the family members were asked if they felt that their person had all the support they needed, one said, 'no, not enough support'. The other family member commented, 'possibly could be more help required and more engagement from the support workers. It is hard because I don't see it. [Person] can be hard to engage with (due to limited communication) but will tell you. Staff are not encouraging. They are doing what the person wants but not encouraging in expanding and diversifying what [person] can do'.

Something you do not like or something you would change in your home?

Common themes from the participants about something they do not like or would like to change in their home included:

- New and casual staff coming in,
- Not being a part of decisions,
- Not having a say on who they live with,
- Big changes happening at the organisation/home,
- Waiting time for NDIS funding/approval,
- The organisation is not client focused; they appear money focused,
- Poor competency from support staff.

The participant who is waiting to move into supported accommodation commented, 'the person I am living with now makes the decisions and choices for me and I do not like that. I want to be heard. I want the focus on me and be able to make my own choices.' This participant hopes that moving out of their home and into supported accommodation will help them be more independent and be able to make some more decisions in their life. The participant also commented, 'I am currently waiting for the NDIS to tell me when I can move into my group home. It has taken over 7 months so far for me to move. I have had a house and room approved; it is just NDIS funding. I do not like the waiting'.

Another participant commented that they like where they are living but they would prefer to live by themselves. They would like more control about who comes in and out of their home and the supports they get. The person's current home does not have a vehicle, so they rely heavily on taxis to get them places. This can impact them from going out as much as they want to. They would like to live at a place that also has a car so they do not have to rely on taxis all the time as it can cost a lot of money.

Another participant who is currently living in supported accommodation commented that they like their home, however when reflecting back on some of the things they did not like in the past, they

said, 'I did not like casual staff coming in. They were people I did not know, and it happened often. I now have regular staff'. They also did not like that they were not part of the decision making when the house was seeking a new potential housemate. Someone was chosen to live there. They were not involved in the decision. The person had to speak up and, in the end, the potential housemate did not move in. The person's house recently had a new housemate move in and the person said they were involved in the decision this time and was happy about it.

One of the participants who is living in supported accommodation in their own apartment commented that lots of changes happen at the apartments including staffing change. They commented that, 'it can be hard to understand and get used to. I do not like change but if I am told what is happening, I can manage'. This person also commented that they do not like that some of the people who also live in the apartment complex can get angry and fight a lot. 'Sometimes It can be hard to walk away from it because it is happening in the communal area where I need to walk past, or I can hear it through the stair well. There are some people in the apartment that I do not get along with. I did not have a say on who else lives in the apartment complex'.

The person also commented that new staff may sometimes come into their apartment without knocking or waiting for a response. They would use the swipe key and come right in. 'I feel sad when this happens because they are entering my home without permission'.

Family member who has a child currently living in ENU commented their views about the service provider stating, 'I do not like that it is all about the money. The business sees the client as NDIS. They do not see my child as a client. They are short sighted of the holistic approach'.

Another family member commented that there should be a higher level of competency from the support workers. 'They are working in an area where client communication skills are poor. It is something that worries me. Staff should go further than the basics to create a relationship. Communication with family has improved but it depends on the staff. I am always asking for the information'. Something this family member feels that their person does not like is staff telling them what to do. 'Staff could learn tools to working with people with disability for example, how to manage people's behaviours. There should be more awareness of disability and how to communicate with people with disability. Workers should know more about the person they are working with including learning about [and reading] behaviour support plans'.

Who supports you to make decisions about where you live?

The participants all commented that family helps make decisions about where they live. Additionally, some commented that their support workers will give advice, which helps them to make decisions about where they live. 'I get advice from support staff as they work with [person] on a day-to-day basis and I am reliant of the support staff for information'.

How much choice do you have with the things that happen at home?

The participants living in supported accommodation or who are looking to move into group homes commented that they do have a lot of choice about things that happen at home. 'I have a lot of choice and decisions about what happens at home. I was able to talk to my house about getting things fixed because they were not accessible'. Another participant who lives with three other housemates commented, 'with three other housemates involved, it can be very hard when it comes to choices and decisions because we want everyone to have their voices heard. We usually come to an agreement in the end.' The same participant also commented, 'I am allowed to do what I want to do and they [staff] can't stop me.' The participants commented that some of the choices they have include:

- What they eat,
- What they do,
- When they want to leave the house,
- When to go to bed,
- What they wear,
- If they have a problem, staff will listen and help fix it.

One participant commented that if there are things happening in the apartment such as maintenance, the staff will just tell them when is happening. There was no choices or decisions involved with that, however if it happens on a day the participant is not free or busy, they can make different arrangements.

The family member who has a child in ENU commented that the child has limited choices to what happens at the ENU and the activities they may be involved in.

The family member who has a person living in supported accommodation commented that their person has as much choice as they need for their own benefit and capabilities. '[Person] does not have the capacity to make the decisions and choices about their own health and safety. Staff gives [person] choices as far as clothing, for example, but sometimes they may not be the appropriate choice for [person's] safety and wellbeing. [Person] does try to be independent and picked their own things but needs some more encouragement and support to pick appropriate things. There are boundaries or requirements when someone needs to step in to keep them safe'.

If you are not happy with where you are living or the supports you are getting, who can you go to for help?

The majority of the participants commented that if they were not happy with where they are living or the support they were getting, they would tell:

- Family and friends,
- Team leader of the house,
- Support staff,
- Someone from the organisation,
- Management,
- Housemate,
- Political representative
- Support coordinator.

'If I wanted to make a complaint about [organisation] I would talk to the complaint person at [organisation] if someone wasn't doing their job properly.'

'I would speak up – I will talk to the manager. If they do not listen, I would talk to my family – mum, dad, sisters'.

It is important to note here that the people interviewed are connected with SACID and participate in our capacity building activities aimed at educating them about their rights and speaking up. If a consultation included a wider group of participants not engaged with our services the responses may be quite different. Through the Your Service Your Rights workshops we deliver with funding from the Commission we have found that the majority of participants do not know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy with the supports they are receiving.

If you could choose a dream home, what would it look like?

A common theme for a dream home included:

- Living near family and friends,
- Having independence,
- An accessible home,
- Somewhere close to public transport and shops,
- Accessible car,
- A home that is safe,

- A home that is mine,
- A home with an outdoor area/garden,
- A home where I can have pets.
- A home with more supports so I can work on my independence skills.

Most of the participants who currently live in supported accommodation like where they are living. They may consider either living by themselves or with housemates, as long as they have common interests and a space, they can have to themselves.

Which right is the most important to you about your home (list of rights)

All the participants commented that all of the rights are important to living at home:

- Right to be safe,
- right to speak out,
- Right to dignity,
- Right to complain,
- Right to make choices,
- Right to privacy,
- Right to freedom.

The most important right that was commented by the family members was the right to be safe. 'Safety is the choice – because it is the most basic and we don't have the luxury to request and follow the others. If [person] is not alive there is no point to having access to dignity when you are dead'.

Other participants living in supported accommodation commented that they have all those rights living where they are.

'I have rights at my home. I can come and go. I can talk to people and mingle. I have the right to privacy – I have my own key. I have the rights to feel safe – I feel safe at home. If I am not feeling safe, I will tell staff. I have the right to speak up and feel I can do this. I have the right to make a complaint – I would talk to my house manager or my family. I feel that I am respected at home. I have freedom at home. I can come and go as I please. I have the right to make choices'.



South Australian Council
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Thank you for your interest in the work of SACID.

If you would like more information please contact us via:



PHONE: 08 8352 4416



EMAIL: ADMIN@SACID.ORG.AU



WEBSITE: WWW.SACID.ORG.AU



FACEBOOK: [@SACID.ORG.AU](https://www.facebook.com/SACID.ORG.AU)

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