



Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Honourable members of the Joint Standing Committee,

Re: Inquiry into Supported Independent Living

The Disability Council NSW ("the Council"), is a statutory body made up of members of the disability community that advises the NSW Government on matters relating to government policy relating to the need to improve inclusion for people with disability. The Council would like to thank the Joint Standing Committee for inquiring into the issue of Supported Independent Living ("SIL") and giving the public an opportunity to provide input on this matter.

The Council submits the following concerns, comments and recommendation for the consideration of the Joint Standing Committee as it inquires into the issues surrounding SIL:

- **Difficulty in accessing SIL through NDIS plans** – The Council recommends that the means of applying and accessing SIL through the NDIS be made clearer and simpler. NDIS participants report that obscure wording formulas or statements are required to be in NDIS plans before a participant may be able to access SIL through their plan, something which is unacceptable – there should not be such unreasonable obstacles placed in the NDIS preventing participants from accessing the supports that they need, including SIL. The Council recommends that the NDIA publish guidelines on how NDIS participants and carers can access SIL should they need it.
- **Confusion around eligibility for SIL** – The Council recommends that the NDIA be clearer on when an NDIS participant will be eligible for receiving SIL through their NDIS plan. Council has received reports that substantial confusion exists in the disability community as to what requirements must be met before an NDIS participant will be deemed eligible to receive SIL. This situation needs to be clarified.
- **Servicing rural and regional areas** – The Council is concerned that the NDIS may not be doing enough to service the market for SIL in rural and regional areas, where lower population densities may make it more difficult to viably provide SIL under the standard NDIS market conditions. The Council

recommends that the NDIA do more to support the SIL market in rural and regional areas.

- **Flexibility in SIL arrangements** – The Council is concerned that the current structure of the SIL system within the NDIS to live with their families and carers in an SIL context. The Council recommends that NDIA structure the SIL system to provide greater flexibility to participants to live with carers and family if they wish to do so.
- **Unclear definition of SIL** – The Council recommends that the NDIA produce a clearer definition of what SIL is. NDIS providers, participants and carers have expressed confusion as to what qualifies as an SIL arrangement. In line with this, the Council recommends that more guidance be provided by the NDIA as to what qualifies as an acceptable SIL arrangement.
- **Concerns about participant choice in SIL arrangements** – The Council is concerned that NDIS participants may lack choice in an SIL arrangement as most of the power in the arrangement ends up resting with the provider. This could lead to adverse outcomes, particularly in group living situations, where participants may have no choice in the decision of a provider to allow inappropriate or incompatible people to live in within an SIL house together. This is of particular concern for NDIS participants who may be or feel vulnerable due to the disability and personal characteristics who could be placed in an unsafe living arrangement if an incompatible NDIS participant is also placed in a room in their SIL house. The Council recommends that the NDIA put in a place a strict regime to ensure that thorough compatibility and safety assessments take place before additional NDIS participants are added into an already occupied SIL home under the NDIS.

The Council thanks you once again for giving us the opportunity to comment on such an important issue that affects the lives of NDIS participants and their carers.

Yours sincerely

Mark Tonga

Chair

Disability Council NSW