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SPEAKING UP FOR YOU INC. protects and defends vulnerable people with disability through individual advocacy to address injustices and to make a positive and sustainable difference to their lives.

5th September, 2019

Speaking Up For You (SUFY) is an Individual Advocacy Organisation for people with a disability in Brisbane, Moreton bay and the Redlands area.

SUFY welcomes the opportunity to comment on Supported Independent Living and the implications for people with a disability. As an advocacy group, our submission is compiled on the experiences of people with a disability who are funded under Supported Independent Living

SIL is meant to help with and/or supervise tasks to develop the skills of an individual to live as independently as possible. SIL supports are provided to a participant in their home, regardless of property ownership, and can be in a shared or individual arrangement.

Assistance provided to a participant is included as part of their plan depending on the level of support they require to live independently in the housing option of their choice.

The reality is that many people with a disability are forced to live in group homes under SIL funding with other people with a disability in order to receive supports. This is due to the limited availability of accessible and affordable housing, and reflects the belief that some people with a disability require special purpose care arrangements rather than genuine community living options.

There is very little information available to people with a disability who are funded under a SIL arrangement to help them gain an understanding of the program. This is possibly because SIL actually facilitates a mechanism for block funding that enforces people into shared care settings that are organized and controlled by the NDIS system and the service provider.

There is limited information available to people with a disability that explains who and how a vacancy is filled in a shared arrangement. No policy is available from the NDIA that requires service providers or the NDIS to assist people to make informed choices by providing honest information, advice and support about the short coming of SIL.

These short comings include limited choice of service provider. One person was asked to sign a service agreement that stated 'You may withdraw from your SIL agreement for any reason by providing 90 days written notice of your intention to terminate this agreement.' The person was a tenant of Queensland Housing and had no intention of leaving his home, he just wanted to change service providers. When asked what would happen if he gave notice of his intention to leave. The service provider said he could take his funding and look for a vacancy in another SIL. It appears that if he wanted to continue living in his home he would have to forgo having a choice of service provider. Individuals also have to give up the notion of self-directing if they are in a SIL arrangement as funding under SIL is agency managed.

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SUFY IS AN INDEPENDENT INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL ADVOCACY ORGANISATION FOR PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITY IN BRISBANE and THE MORETON BAY REGION**

The NDIA will contact the service provider and ask them to put in a SIL quote without informing the individuals that will be placed in this arrangement that this has occurred. In most instances, the avoidance of truthful information has reinforced the misconception that a person with high support needs or complex support needs can only receive support under a SIL arrangement. This misconception is spread by service providers, supports coordinators, guardians and NDIA planners.

Many people with a disability have been subjected to abuse and neglect while living in shared arrangements as is evident in the following case studies.

Case study

Jack lives in a Queensland Housing residence with one other person. This was the result of funding caps placed on individual support arrangements and Disability Services vacancy coordination policy. Jack and his family have been waiting for the introduction of the NDIS in Queensland in the belief that he would be able to choose his service provider, self-direct his funding and consequently have real choice and control over his supports and living arrangement.

Jack's parents attended his planning meeting and explained that it was important that Jack's plan be self-managed. It was understood that they as Jack's nominees could manage the funding for supports for Jack. They heavily emphasized at the planning meeting concerns they had with the current service provider and their inability to understand or provide the support Jack required. This was putting Jack at risk.

Despite this when Jack's plan came through it was approved as Supported Independent living (SIL) and the self-managed request was not approved. It was clear from initial conversations with the service provider that they were not prepared to allow another service provider in the house to provide Jack's personal care.

Jack has been informed that he can leave the house and take his funding to another provider. Jack was not provided with the appropriate level of funding so that he could live on his own. The only option he has is to move into a vacancy in another SIL funded group home.

Case Study

Jan lived at home until 2007 then moved into care when she turned 18. Over this time she lived in 10 different homes and has been subjected to ongoing physical and verbal abuse from a string of mismatched cotenant's and inappropriate support workers that she was forced to live with. At one time the situation became unbearable for Jan and she started to "abscond" from her residence as she felt safer sleeping in parks than in her home. During this time she was placed on medication for anxiety and developed some self-harming behaviors. The last assault occurred in April 2019 when Jan's cotenant put his arms around her neck and squeezed her tightly. Despite this horrific history Jan was funded under a SIL arrangement and is requesting a review so that she can live on her own.

Case Study

Morgan's family had put years of planning and lobbying government departments to develop a service model that would provide appropriate housing and support so that he could live on his own and be supported by people who he felt safe with and who understood his support needs. Morgan as with many people with a disability had been subjected to physical, emotional and verbal abuse from previous cotenants. Morgan's service provider contacted SUFY and said that Morgan's NDIS planner had stated that this model of support was not sustainable under the NDIS and that it was highly unlikely that Morgan would get the same level of funding in their next plan. When it was explained that the SIL arrangement would probably cost the same the planner agreed but stated



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that it was the way of the system. The planner said that some of Morgan's funding could be used to explore SIL options as this was the expectation of the plan.

While the Independent Living Scheme is in place people with a disability living in Australia will not be able to fulfill their human right under Article 19 of the CRPD to choose freely where and with whom they will live. The SIL is in breach of the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013. The objectives and general principles of this act aim for people with a disability to have choice and control in the supports they require.