

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION

Disability support services

Date of consultation:	14 August 2017
Group consulted with:	Disability support services
Number of attendees:	12
Name of organisations:	Focus ACT, Advocacy for Inclusion, PWD ACT, Marymead, Benambra, ADACAS, Project Independence, Havelock Housing, ACT Office for Disability

Key themes arising from the consultation

- Education is a key priority to ensure people with disability (and carers and guardians) who want to access the affordable home purchase market know what pathways are available to them.
- Affordable products need to address the needs of people with disabilities – this could be achieved by adopting Universal Design standards as a minimum.
- Make sure affordable products go to the right people.
- A need for more accessibility for people living with disability – this means physical access in housing as well as accessible formats for information.
- Collaboration between Government and services is needed – ‘a joined-up approach.’ We also need better coordination between ACT government and community services, including better assessment of disability to determine NDIS eligibility.
- There are gaps in policy that need to be addressed – e.g. early intervention and support strategies for children/young people, people living with disability and mental health.
- Better clarity between case management and case coordination is required.
- Greater effort is needed to eliminate barriers/provide incentives for rough sleepers to access support, particularly if they initially refuse support because of an earlier negative experience with services. For example, they may need more than two offers of public housing.

Key quotes

- “We need to walk alongside people when supporting them, not push from behind or decide for them.”
- “People living with disability are often put in the ‘too hard basket’ by services which don’t have the training or resources to support them.”



- “Your need for services such as home care shouldn’t dictate your living requirements”
- “There is still an emotional difference between owning a home and renting a home – we need to encourage pride of place for renters.”
- “Get rid of indefinite tenure in public housing – it has a huge impact on intergenerational poverty.”
- “The community development work that we do at Benambra to keep the community connected is substantial and important – it took us a while to get there, it wasn’t always what we imagined, but it was worth it.”
- “You can neglect people in a person-centred plan by not giving them choice and control. There is research that if someone has choice and control over their decisions and goals, they are more likely to want to meet those goals.”
- “For a personal support plan, rules around what the money can be spent on need to be flexible. For example, the NDIS plans do not allow for things like paying for a football uniform, which can actually assist people to participate in sport and community. A personal support plan which is flexible should allow things like that which help people engage in their community. Don’t think of it like a bureaucrat – be flexible and responsive.”

What is working well?

- Some people have achieved stable accommodation after periods of homelessness.
- Benambra is working well– people there are heavily involved in community and take pride in the appearance of the house and the additional support works well for the 25 households.
- Many Housing ACT housing managers have been fabulous about coming and offering support to people when there is an issue.
- Housing ACT (using stimulus money) undertook a building project to build new, smaller houses for older people in public housing to downsize and move into more suitable dwellings – that was a great project and we should look at it again.

What could be improved?

- Address policy gaps.
- Onelink is ineffectual because of a lack of referral options.
- Social disadvantage stigma – there is a perception that there is no ‘fair go’ within the private rental market.
- Develop stories about housing successes
- Insufficient supply of short term/emergency accommodation.
- Private boarding houses no longer take people with complex issues because of the increasing demand (e.g. from people on low incomes).
- More resourcing of homeless shelters
- Greater flexibility/better choice of housing location for rough sleepers with mental health issues.
- Outreach teams need better resourcing and must include wrap-around support including professionals from mental health, primary health, housing, and drug and alcohol fields.
- Better support for people exiting statutory institutions.
- Longer periods of support required for women and children escaping DFV.
- Universal design standards should be mandated. There is very little take up, less than 5 per cent of builds achieve the minimum requirement.
- Boarding houses and institutional settings have no place for people living with disabilities – social inclusion required.
- Long term tenancies for rentals will improve affordability as people won’t be desperate to move into the purchase market.
- Expand community housing stock with government assistance.

New ideas

- Flexible design options as standard in buildings – so they are easier to modify later as needs change
- Utilise SDA/NDIA incentives to build accessible dwellings and advertise to people what is available
- Deposit gap could be bridged by using CRA or a component of CRA as a mandatory pre-tax contribution to a savings fund for a house deposit
- Flexible finance options – such as the ability to rent to buy in Land Rent
- Attach funding to the person not the service so the client has choice.
- Having a greater range of affordable housing options e.g. tiny houses
- A compulsory 2 year support plan for children/young people exiting foster/residential care, like in NSW.
- Utilising empty private dwellings by providing incentives to landlords e.g. guaranteed rent and/or long term lease, might make a below market rent attractive. Similar to Defence Housing.
- Reviewable leases in social housing
- Housing First/Housing in Place approach – better to have wrap-around flexible services with stable housing rather than needing to move if the support needs change.
- Affordability criteria should have an additional consideration for people living with a disability – e.g. people living with a disability shouldn't have to meet the same strict criteria as they may receive additional financial help from other sources (i.e. family).
- Improve options or provide incentives or guarantees and de-risking for Banks/Lenders to provide finance to people with disabilities.