



Australian Government

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Younger People in Residential Aged Care – Action Plan

The Australian Government is committed to minimising the need for younger people to live in aged care facilities. We will take concrete actions to reduce the number of younger people aged under 65 who need to live in aged care and to help them access more age-appropriate housing and supported living options.

While appropriate attention will be given to the small number of younger people aged under 45, this will not preclude or prevent these actions immediately benefitting all younger people aged under 65 currently living in residential aged care.

Goals

- supporting those already living in aged care aged under 45 to find alternative, age appropriate housing and supports by 2022, if this is their goal;
- supporting those already living in aged care aged under 65 to find alternative, age appropriate housing and supports by 2025, if this is their goal; and
- halving the number of younger people aged under 65 years entering aged care by 2025.

The Government will continue to work beyond 2025 to minimise to the fullest extent possible the number of younger people aged under 65 years entering and living in aged care.

Why this action plan is needed

Younger people with disability who have not been able to secure appropriate housing and supports have historically moved into residential aged care as a last resort. The aged care system is designed to support the needs of older people, and is not designed or equipped to meet all of the needs of younger people with disability.

As at 30 September 2018, the Department of Health reported there were 5,905 people aged under 65 living in residential aged care facilities across Australia. Of these, 188 were aged under 45.

Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare indicates that a significant number of younger people enter aged care each year. In 2017-18, more than 2,500 younger people aged under 65 entered aged care. This is matched by a similar number of younger people exiting aged care. In 2017-18 more than 2,500 younger people aged under 65 exited aged care, meaning the number of younger people in aged care has remained relatively constant. Almost two thirds of exits are due to ageing or passing, with only 10 to 15 per cent moving into more suitable alternative housing options, such as returning to their family or home, or other residential care. Reducing the number of younger people entering aged care is therefore key to reducing the number of younger people living in residential aged care.

Younger people living in aged care 30 September 2018 (Source: Dept of Health)	
Under 65	5905
Under 55	1179
Under 45	188
Under 35	30

There are a number of reasons younger people are living in aged care facilities. Younger people with disability often have complex health needs. The difficulty in accessing appropriate health supports in other settings is one of the main reasons younger people go to live in aged care.

Another key reason younger people are entering aged care is the lack of suitable housing. There is a significant gap in the market for highly specialised disability accommodation. As at 31 December 2018, there were almost 2,600 Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) properties enrolled in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), and almost 11,000 NDIS participants with SDA supports in their plans. It is estimated that approximately 28,000 participants will require SDA when the NDIS is fully rolled out.

As at 31 December 2018, there were around 4,000 younger people aged under 65 living in aged care who had been deemed eligible for NDIS. Around 3,000 of these NDIS participants have an active NDIS plan, including 143 people aged under 45. This represents a 91 per cent increase in the number of younger people in aged care with an active NDIS plan in the past year. However, only 32 younger people had been approved for and had SDA included in their plans. Improving access to SDA for NDIS participants is therefore another key to reducing the number of younger people living in aged care.

This action plan builds on a number of important initiatives already announced to reduce the need for younger people to live in aged care.

- On 16 November 2018, the Government announced the commencement of the rollout of a new NDIS Complex Support Needs Pathway. This new pathway will support all NDIS participants in aged care, or currently in hospital settings who are at risk of entering aged care given their need for significant supports and a lack of other accommodation options.
- On 8 February 2019, the Government announced significant reforms to improve choice and control for eligible NDIS participants, build market confidence and drive stronger investment in SDA. These changes will allow eligible people to be approved for SDA and have it included in their NDIS plans up front, so participants, their carers or families can go into the market and find or commission a home that suits their individual needs.

Actions

Faster access, better planning and integrated supports

The NDIS enables younger people with disability who have high support needs to be funded to get the support they need in the community, rather than entering aged care. The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is taking a number of actions to find suitable alternative housing and supports to help NDIS participants who are in, or are at risk of entering, aged care from hospital settings.

- By July 2019, the Complex Support Needs Pathway will give all NDIS participants in aged care, or currently in hospital settings and at risk of entering aged care given their need for significant supports and a lack of other accommodation options, access to:
 - appropriate access and planning decisions
 - support coordinators who can tap into specialised knowledge on housing options, including SDA
 - planning discussions tailored to explore and confirm housing and support goals, and
 - assessments and approvals for assistive technology and home modifications.
- Plans will be tailored to each person's cultural and disability needs. The planning process will allow multiple opportunities for conversations and encourage advocacy.
- The NDIA will build relationships between support coordinators, planners, community organisations and the disability housing and support market. This could include information sharing events or platforms.
- The NDIA will explore the benefits of specialised plan implementation services, including improved communications and engagement with providers to source local accommodation and supports for participants in aged care.
- The Australian Government will implement NDIS workforce development strategies that improve the quality and capacity of the disability workforce.
- The NDIA will ensure participants have access to full reasonable and necessary supports if they have needs beyond those that would be met by aged care. This includes:
 - functional supports
 - exploring housing options
 - capacity building to prepare for transition to the community
 - assistive technology, and
 - community inclusion and social participation.

Further information on NDIS pathway reform, including the new Complex Support Needs Pathway can be found at: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/news/1215-ndis-pathway-reform>

Improved processes and pathways from hospital

State and territory governments remain responsible for providing health and rehabilitation services, and under the principles of universal design and liveable housing design standards, to provide social and mainstream housing accessible to people with a disability. Mainstream services have an important role to play in supporting people with a disability. Hospital discharge planning needs to work with younger people and the NDIA to determine the most appropriate discharge solution for each individual.

- Australian Government actions will complement the efforts of state and territory governments to meet their responsibilities for providing health and housing supports.
- The number of younger people being admitted to aged care from hospital will be reduced by:
 - appropriate planning to ensure home modifications are completed before a participant is discharged. In the exceptional cases where this does not occur, the NDIS will consider funding for short-term bridging accommodation
 - developing stronger relationships and coordination between hospital discharge planners, NDIS support coordinators and Aged Care Assessment Teams
 - NDIA access and planning decisions made through the Complex Support Needs Pathway
 - improved information sharing and timeliness of allied health assessments
 - learning from hospital discharge planning pilots conducted around the country. This includes current work to implement the learnings from those pilots in a South Australian discharge project being undertaken by the NDIA.

Supporting the development of the specialist housing market

Younger people with a disability have been directed to aged care due to a lack of suitable alternative housing and supports. One support that may accommodate the needs of younger people in aged care is SDA. SDA is housing for people who require specialist housing solutions, including to assist with the delivery of supports that cater for their extreme functional impairment or very high support needs. Funding for SDA is only provided to NDIS participants who meet specific eligibility criteria.

There is currently a shortfall in the availability of SDA for younger people who require this level of support. The SDA market is not yet mature, with limited supply, lack of demand data for potential investors, and significant lead-time required for construction of new stock.

The Australian Government is implementing proactive reforms in SDA to afford younger people with disability access to suitable housing where they need it, now and into the future.

- By November 2019, SDA providers will be able to have their building plans pre-certified prior to the completion of construction to speed up access and encourage investment.
- By July 2020, younger NDIS participants in aged care will, where eligible, have their appropriate SDA type recorded in their first plan or plan review so they can receive a budget for SDA before they have found a property.
- NDIS participants will no longer have to exhaust all housing and support options before they can be found eligible for SDA.
- The NDIA will work with industry through a reference group to release regular and useful data to support investment in SDA, as well as consider further changes to assist in the development of a vibrant SDA market.

Further information on the full suite of reforms to SDA can be found at:

<https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers-programs-services-government-international-disability-reform-council/reports-and-publications>

Understanding younger people who enter aged care

The Australian Government will conduct an analysis of the characteristics of younger people in aged care to understand their needs and what works. This work will also improve data and reporting.

Key dependencies

Achieving our goals is dependent on a number of factors.

The NDIS cannot achieve this on its own.

It will take the collaborative engagement and positive contribution from all people with disability, their families, carers and supporters; the Australian and state and territory Governments, providers and investors in the SDA market; and other stakeholders.

This positive and collaborative engagement will enable the NDIA to work with participants to find alternatives to aged care. Access to health services and to suitable public and community housing solutions, as well as an expanded SDA market, will be critical in ensuring there are other options for these younger people with a disability.

This plan recognises and prioritises the rights of people to determine where they live. Younger people currently living in residential aged care will only be assisted to move where that is their goal and preference.

This plan also recognises that in some limited circumstances aged care may remain the safest and most suitable housing for some younger people.

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