

Accommodation Services

Introduction

Accommodation for a person with a disability or, more accurately, supported accommodation is funded primarily by Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC). Other forms of funding may be provided through a compensable claims process for people who may have been disabled due to a traffic accident, workplace accident or some other catastrophic event and the remainder through private family funding, trusts etc.

The vast majority of government funded supported accommodation places are directed to people with a disability whose needs are regarded as high and complex. The majority of these people are supported in group home accommodation situated across metropolitan and regional NSW. ADHC operates many group homes across the state as do many non-Government organisations including Sunnyfield which operates two large residential facilities (Carinya and Hostel), 26 group homes, seven drop-in support models, and Living Linkage programs in Tamworth.

Background

Large scale development of community based supported accommodation commenced in line with the devolution of NSW large government hospitals and the deinstitutionalisation of their residents. This followed the tabling of the Richmond Report in 1983 followed by the 1986 Commonwealth Disability Services Act, The Commonwealth State Disability Agreement in 1991 and then the 1993 NSW Disability Services Act. Many hundreds of people with psychiatric illnesses and developmental disabilities were prioritised for supported accommodation and over the course of the last 26 years, hundreds of group homes and other accommodation models have been developed to provide care and support for a wide variety of people with a disability.

Funding for this type of support comes in different forms but the majority of funds have been by a government “block grant” to organisations to provide supported accommodation for a specified number of people. Where a block grant is provided, the organisation has to lease or purchase houses, staff the houses, operate and maintain them within the funding requirements of the grant. Residents of these homes contribute a percentage of their disability support pension towards “food and lodging” in line with government and organisational policy. Outside of this many families also contribute to their relative’s support and care. In more recent years, people who have transitioned out of their family home into a supported accommodation home will have been funded individually and not through a block grant, however this funding still contributes to their care, support and home maintenance.

The demand for supported accommodation far exceeds the supply. For example, the number of funded accommodation places in NSW is approximately 5,000, while the waiting list is approximately 20,000. Unmet need has been recognised as an issue in Australian Government disability policy since the 1990s. This was prompted by the release of Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that less than half the people with a disability in Australia who were entitled to support actually received it.

Access to Supported Accommodation

Gaining access to a supported accommodation funding package is not a simple or guaranteed process. Firstly, a person with a disability has to be assessed as being eligible for supported accommodation and this is determined by the ADHC Regional Information and Referral Service who give the person a priority rating. If eligible, the person is then placed on a waiting list, as funding for accommodation is not automatic and is done in line with the overall financial management and budgeting exercise of ADHC and the NSW Treasury. In some cases individuals may access funding faster than others due to extenuating circumstances e.g. a person’s parents die and the person has no-one to care for them. Supported accommodation funding is recurrent (on-going) and may average \$100,000 per person per year across the state.

The ADHC Regional Information and Referral Service determines the priority for entry against the following criteria:

- people with complex multiple needs;

- people with assessed complex challenging behaviour;
- people with issues relating to the criminal justice system;
- people who are at risk of entering a more restrictive option and/or whose carer is likely to be at risk unless entry into the service is facilitated; and
- people who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless

Supported accommodation is for people over the age of 18 who have an intellectual disability with moderate to high support needs. To be eligible, people must have an independent assessment, which determines their level of support needs. People aged from 12 to 18 can access a service but only with approval of the Director-General or Minister, while people under the age of 12 are generally not eligible for this type of service and must have the approval of the Director-General. Accommodation for people with a disability in NSW is now provided across a range of different accommodation models which include but is not limited to the following models:

Group Home (small)

Usually a contemporary single storey house with four to five bedrooms providing 24 hour support or less. This is the predominant model within Sunnyfield and the disability sector and is designed to provide accommodation support for all ages.

Cluster Model (medium)

A cluster model uses houses or units in close proximity with five to 10 beds supporting between 20 to 50 people with 24 hour support. Clusters are designed to support clients with complex health and behavioural needs with access to specialist services and nursing support where appropriate.

Villa Apartments

This model provides domestic single storey villas and apartments with one to three bedrooms accommodating six to 10 people with 24 hour support. Villas and apartments may be developed across five sites in close geographic proximity (either on a single site or multiple sites) and are designed for adults.

Co-located Model

Co-located models provide domestic accommodation with five to 10 bedrooms under one or two rooflines with 24 hour support. This could include a duplex, apartment or a house plus granny flat. This model is designed only for adults, with a focus on providing accommodation support for those with complex or behavioural support needs.

Sunnyfield

Families considering out-of-home supported accommodation for their relative with Sunnyfield must first apply to DADHC to determine eligibility. Vacancies in Sunnyfield group homes are **not** filled by an internal process but through the ADHC Allocation Committee situated within the ADHC Regional Offices. Sunnyfield is no longer able to accept applications for Carinya or Allambie Hostel due to a determination from ADHC.

Families who wish to and capable of financially supporting their relative in relation to the building and care and support costs, are encouraged to approach Sunnyfield who will do everything possible to support the development of a self-funded and managed accommodation service.

Sunnyfield is committed to:

- providing accommodation services to the people we support that are innovative and meet best practice standards;
- ensuring that the accommodation services have a grounded person centred approach and culture that will allow the people we support, their families and our staff to realise their full potential and dreams; and
- achieving a level of financial independence that will in time provide both control and choice in the development of new and innovative supported accommodation for people with an intellectual disability without the constraints of government funding and regulations.