



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Public
Accounts and Administration

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Specialist Disability Accommodation service delivery through Housing ACT

Submission number: 02

Submitter: Coleen Box

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PHONE [REDACTED]

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Background

My name is Coleen Box. I am the legal guardian (under ACT legislation) for [REDACTED]. He is an NDIS participant. I am also his plan and correspondence nominee. [REDACTED] was born in 1983 so is now 43 years old.

Prior to the establishment of the NDIS [REDACTED] was a client of Disability ACT. He was supported and housed by them since approximately 2000. He is currently housed in an ACT government property and has been in that property since approximately 2009.

When the NDIS was established [REDACTED] was reassessed under the Federal standards for the NDIS and was accepted into the scheme.

The original basis for acceptance by the ACT government for support was not sufficiently rigorous to be switched automatically and participants needed to be reassessed under Federal standards.

At that time [REDACTED] was offered a tenancy of the property he occupies and he accepted that. He has 24/7 1:1 support in that property.

Circumstances around the registration and lapse of registration of the ACT Government as a Specialist Disability Accommodation program member.

At no time during the transfer of the participant to the NDIS was the status of the property as SDA property mentioned. The transfer of clients and property occupancy were handled as separate issues. [REDACTED] had his tenancy and was exited from Disability ACT. The actual transfer took some years as for the initial period, staff costs were claimed by the ACT government from the Federal scheme.

In terms of the lapse of registration. We were not aware that the property was registered as an SDA property until approximately late 2023/early 2024 when funding for SDA appeared in his plan. It had not been mentioned previously.

In 2024 when the funding appeared, both myself and [REDACTED]'s support coordinator approached ACT Housing to query the status of the arrangement. Advice was received that "SDA is still awaiting approval and before the cabinet." The NDIA was also querying me, as his nominee, why the funding was not being used. This matters as the NDIA does not have strong or obvious communication strengths so tracking decisions made and the consequential impacts is very difficult.

We were querying the status as the property "does need urgent repairs – there is damage caused by him but due to his disability – and that is exactly what this money could be used for – to make the property safe for him and the staff that support him." (Excerpt from my email to Housing ACT in November 2024.)

National Disability Insurance Scheme funding used for Specialist Disability Accommodation

We have not been able to use any of the funding allocated. It's not a huge amount – now sitting at \$25833.87. Oddly it did not appear in early plans - only in the plans when the NDIS changed systems. In line with their practice if funding is not used and the plan is rolled over – the funding accumulates. We have no idea how the amount of funding has been calculated.

While it's not a huge amount – it could have made a huge difference to improve the safety and look of the property -

Own-source revenue used for Specialist Disability Accommodation

No comment.

Whether tenants with disabilities have had essential home modifications delayed or denied due to budget or process constraints.

Of course they have.

That's a self evident statement because there's been no actual recognition that the tenant has a disability. There was an ideal opportunity to identify a group of individuals through their NDIA participation and address their needs – and there was some funding available.

I can't comment on budget constraints BUT I do know that essential repairs do not take place. So not only do essential repairs not take place, nothing is done/has been done to actually improve the property and make it more pleasant for someone to live in and more functional for the occupant and the support staff to do their support work.

In our case there is minimal recognition of the impact of the property on the occupant. Damage has occurred because of his complex behaviours. The process through which trades people come to repair the property do not take into account the actual disability of this tenant. The outcome is that repairs are not appropriate, not acceptable to the tenant – who then undoes

them. (A simple example. Retiling took place. The tiles did not match the original tiles so the tenant took the tiles off. It's hard to understand but that is the nature of the disability and had there been discussion and negotiation, this work and rework would not have been necessary.)

In our experience, the process does not respect the nature of the tenant's disability which then results in the property being damaged further. He does have the capacity to understand processes and reasons – if they are explained appropriately.

A further point to note – but not part of this process – is that the property is not actually suitable for the tenant. Alternatives are being explored but this would have been so much easier if this issue had been brought to the fore and addressed earlier – it would have at least opened up a communication.

Any other related matter.

Dealing with disabilities is complex and it becomes more complex as the person with the disability ages.

The NDIA is a complex funding system and finding appropriate supports, once you get funding, is complex and challenging. We are constantly challenged by the changes that have occurred within the NDIS.

Housing is an essential component of support but the interaction between the two government systems involved – the Federal government and the ACT government has added to the complexity of the system. The housing also becomes a workplace for many other people, especially when 24/7 support is required. Safety of staff becomes compromised.

It seemed such a simple issue! There is funding in a participant's plan for SDA. How do we use it? You can't because we (the ACT Government) won't.