



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: 06

Submitter: Koomarri

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KOOMARRI

Supporting people with disability.

Cnr Launceston & Callam Streets
Phillip ACT 2606

PO Box 262 Woden ACT 2606

T 02 6280 6143

F 02 6239 1603

www.koomarri.com.au

ABN 38 599 467 782

Submission to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and Administration

Inquiry into Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Service Delivery Through Housing ACT

Submitted by Koomarri

April 2026

**Contact:
Nadine Stephen
Chief Executive Officer**

02 6280 6143



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Summary

Koomarri is the longest serving disability support provider in the Canberra region. For almost 75 years Koomarri has supported individuals and their families to live, learn and work in our community. We support:

- 30 individuals living with disability across 13 homes in the ACT.
- Of these properties 11 are owned by Housing ACT.
- In terms of the management of these properties, one is directly overseen by Housing ACT and 10 are managed by community housing providers Havelock Housing and CHC.

Management includes tenancy and occupancy agreements, modifications, repairs and maintenance. The maintenance response is provided by Programmed.

For people with disability, having a safe and accessible home is not a luxury, it is the foundation for a dignified life and the core of their human rights. Koomarri's experience demonstrates that Housing ACT is not meeting in its responsibility to provide dwellings that meet basic standards of safety, habitability and accessibility resulting in adverse health, safety and wellbeing impacts for tenants and unsafe workplaces for support staff. This places unacceptable risks and costs to residents, families and service providers.

The apparent failure to draw upon substantial Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) funding from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) represents a significant oversight, as these resources were intended to ensure the proper maintenance of ACT government dwellings.

The information set out in this submission demonstrates a significant and persistent disconnect between the ACT government's stated commitments, policy frameworks and legislative obligations, and the lived reality of residents with disability residing in Housing ACT properties.

Koomarri submits its perspectives to the Inquiry, concentrating on the following terms of reference:

- National Disability Insurance Scheme funding used for Specialist Disability Accommodation;
- whether tenants with disabilities have had essential home modifications delayed or denied due to budget or process constraints; and
- any other related matter.



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The National Disability Insurance Scheme funding for Specialist Disability Accommodation

Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) refers to the physical housing (the "bricks and mortar") designed for participants with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs. These homes include specialised features such as reinforced walls, ceiling hoists, or home automation, that allow residents to live more independently and safely.

SDA funding is provided to NDIS participants who meet specific criterion of having an extreme functional impairment or very high support needs. The funding is for the building itself (the dwelling). It does not pay for support workers or daily care.

NDIS funding goes to the registered SDA housing provider, in this instance being Housing ACT to cover the costs associated with modifying and/or maintaining the property. For the period 2017 to December 2025 Housing ACT was officially registered as an SDA provider with the NDIS. It is understood that this was for a total of 112 dwellings, however on no occasion was this funding ever accessed, despite the poor condition of the properties.

Koomarri supports 12 individuals with SDA funding across 6 of these registered ACT properties. A summary of this funding is below:

Suburb of House	SDA funding available 2025-2026	SDA funding available 2022-2025
Gungahlin	\$25,200	
Bonython	\$23,300	\$40,100
Kambah	\$23,000	\$28,000
Kaleen	\$24,000	\$35,000
Isabella Plains	\$40,000	\$21,000
Gordon	\$30,200	\$35,000
Total	\$165,000	\$159,100

The total amount of available yet unspent funding for Koomarri residents is **\$324,100**.

Considering the poor state of ACT housing properties and considerable amount of funding available it is unclear and perplexing as to why this was never accessed for maintenance, repairs and modifications and why the ACT government allowed this registration to lapse.



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Home modifications and maintenance for Koomarri tenants.

The condition of Housing ACT properties accommodated by Koomarri clients is variable with some houses in reasonable condition and others very poor. Issues include mould, rodents and possum infestation, rising damp, water ingress through light fittings, damaged tiles, blocked plumbing, lack of appropriate heating/cooling, uneven walking surfaces including pathways, broken doors and screens, holes in walls and ceilings, collapsed retaining walls and deteriorated facias, gutters and roofing. This is not an exhaustive list but provides insight into the extensive and pervasive issues faced by residents with disability.

The time and resourcing required to address these issues does not align with Housing ACT's own published guidelines outlining repair and maintenance response and rectification timeframes. Our experience includes:

- Inaccurate categorisation of requests resulting in unaddressed safety hazards.
- A persistent lack of communication with families and providers having to seek updates on requests.
- Repair timelines often extending into months or years.
- An emerging trend of general wear and tear and some repairs ordinarily landlord responsibilities being pushed to tenant responsibility.

The continual follow-up necessary to have repairs and maintenance undertaken places enormous and unnecessary burden on Koomarri and families. Examples include:

- A possum and mice living in the roof of a home (two years to complete).
- Major water leak in a residents bedroom light fitting that was fixed several times before it was agreed that the roof tiles needed replacing (six months to complete).
- Black mould in two separate homes (18 months to complete).
- Shoddy workmanship for basic door and screen repairs (three years to finalise).
- Repair of an air conditioner in the middle of summer for a house that accommodates people with high and complex medical support needs (four months to complete).

In March 2026, an ACT Ombudsman report "Falling through the gap" identified systemic failures in how Housing ACT manages tenant repair requests. The report found it often fails to meet legal obligations under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*. Koomarri's experience means these failures also impact on our ability to meet basic employer responsibilities as outlined in the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and NDIS Practice Standards.



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Other matters

The ACT Government has acknowledged the urgent need for structural change and has committed to the following reforms aimed at improving housing standards:

- Contractual Shift. Responsibility for managing the maintenance contract was moved from Housing ACT to Infrastructure Canberra in late 2025.
- In-Sourcing Maintenance. When the current contract with Programmed ends in late 2027, maintenance and repairs will be delivered directly by the government.

Koomarri is advocating for a different approach for disability tenanted homes and believes that responsibility for repairs and maintenance should sit with disability service providers rather than a centralised government agency.

By bypassing bureaucratic layers, providers can respond faster to urgent repairs that impact resident health and safety. Unlike general maintenance crews, disability providers possess a deep understanding of the house and any specific requirements and safety protocols necessary for participants with complex needs. They are better positioned to ensure that modifications such as automated doors, specialised bathroom fixtures, or sensory-friendly lighting are maintained to the precise standards required for participant safety and independence.

Since providers are already on-site delivering daily support, they have a direct line of sight into the condition of the dwelling. Integrating maintenance into their remit can ensure that the physical environment is managed with the same level of care and accountability as the support service themselves.

Conclusion

Koomarri strongly believes evidence provided in this submission validates a profound discrepancy between the ACT Government's official policy frameworks and the lived reality experienced by residents with disability, their families and support providers. Koomarri remains concerned about the condition of Housing ACT properties and systemic issues with the current maintenance model and proposed new model, we encourage the government to consider outsourcing repairs and maintenance of disability houses to the disability providers.

Koomarri presents this submission as a testament to our dedication to people with a disability, their families and willingness to work with the government. With 75 years of specialist experience we recognise the importance of our role in providing housing and support services and look forward to the opportunity to collaborate further and discuss our proposal in more detail.