

## **National Conference 2019 What next for SDA?**

### **LUKE BO'SHER - CEO**

Hi, everyone. Welcome back from afternoon tea and thanks for dragging yourselves away from the scones and coming back in here for our final Q&A panel.

So hopefully, everyone enjoyed the concurrent sessions and enjoyed the opportunity to dive in to a bit deeper on the content around some of these questions in SDA.

So I'm really pleased to have this plenary panel and now we're kind of looking forward to the future about what does the future look like around the SDA and how can we move these things forward?

So on our panel today is Mike Zorbas from the Property Council of Australia, Antonia Albanese from NDIA, Bruce Bonyhady AM from the Melbourne Disability Institute, Chris McHugh from Suncorp and Cameron Bird from Ernst & Young.

So we've come up with some questions based on the feedback that we've got throughout the day from Slido for each of our speakers and are keen for them to share a bit of their perspective, then we'll come back for a question that all of them will answer and then we'll make some final comments for today.

So first off, we wanted to turn to Antonia to hear a little bit more about SDA and how these changes that the minister and Rob spoke about earlier today are being implemented. So Antonia, can you talk us through what these changes look like to SDA that are being made at the moment within the NDIA and how you're thinking about the way they'll be scaled up as more participants get SDA in their plans?

### **ANTONIA ALBANESE:**

Yeah, that's a really good question, can everyone hear me? Am I switched on?

No? That's better, everyone hear me now.

Good question, Luke and thank you, everyone for having me, really exciting to be here. I think to see such a big crowd and I think a few have dropped off after afternoon tea, I hope it's not a profile of these speakers, but more that everyone is rushing to get to their weekend. But I cast my mind back to the 12, 18 months ago when I started and it was just 4 angry mobs of SDA providers chasing me around, and now we've got a much happier group here today. So I think that's a testament to some of the changes that have been announced and some of the work that we've been doing as a sector, of late.

A good question about some of the changes, and I know that the minister and Rob this morning, would've spoken at a high level about those, I'll probably stick to 3, there are quite a few.

I think the first really significant change, as boring as it sounds is around process and certainly, I don't get out of bed in the morning all excited about changing process. But if you think about participants being at the end of each of our processes. That kind of brings it to life for you, that every time something takes a long time, someone's waiting for an answer or waiting to get in to their new home or even just waiting to find out they're going to be

eligible to look at housing as an option. So for us, the anxiety that that creates for our providers and our participants is really front of mind, and we had a really good look at the process and the experience that that represented for our participants. And it's fair to say when I first had a really good look at it, I just could not understand. It just was baffling how anyone could navigate some of the complexity, so such a sensible thing to just take a different lens and strip away some of that complexity and make it much, much easier.

We trialled it in the first instance having a different method of decision and for those who have used it, certainly some of the providers would've been through the new panel arrangements, it's so much quicker and a much better experience for our participants.

I think the question of scalability is a really good one. We are really confident that we can handle the volume that the sector will bring.

I think for us, the next step in making it even better is ensuring that participants have much better information at the planning stage. So we still find that the planning conversations could be more robust and could provide participants with more information about their choices and their optionality and we've got to get much better at that. So it brings me to my second change and point because it was a discussion that we had at our inaugural reference group meeting on Tuesday. So one of the announcements was that we would gather together a group of thought leaders who could really influence and help the agency and the government through some of these changes to SDA and we brought the group together for the first time on Tuesday.

We had over a hundred and thirty people request to be part of that, so that just blew me away. I thought it was unbelievable how many people are really interested and really care and would have loved to have had all of them, but obviously, you can't. So, we had a really tough job of just selecting representation.

We've got representatives from financiers, probably similar to the profile of people here today, participant advocacy, people who really care in the sector about housing, a variety of different voices including our own to really shift the conversation forward and I think I'm about to give you one takeout from that group.

There was a really healthy tension in the room which was good, so it wasn't kind of a love fest where we all get along and everyone agrees which is not what you want. There was advocacy having a really strong view about what's best for participants and then you've got this voice of what's practical to build and how can we rescale this and I think for us, it was that tension between the speed to getting this out in the market quickly, because we know that there is an unmet need versus the very, very important responsibility we have to ensure that what it built is reflective of participants' preferences.

So, I think I'm really looking forward to working with that group, and I think that there's also a really, really positive change and step in the right direction. And for those who have sort of felt in the past that we could be a bit of a black box and not sure what goes on, I think this is a really positive step in opening up the decision making from the agency and including others in the conversation.

Probably the last thing and if I think about scalability, one that's really critical comes down to data and information.

We've been producing more and more data through our quarterly reports relating to SDA, and there's been a really strong feeling from the sector that more is needed and I completely agree. I think the provision of data will help us make really evidence-based decisions and will support providers to really focus on the areas that matter.

I think though to really scale this forward and to have more meaningful conversations using the data, we absolutely need more preference data. So, we have a lot of information about where SDA dollars may be spent for now and where people are living at the moment. But I don't think we've collected enough information about how our participants feel about where they're living at the moment, where might they choose to live in the future and what kind of environments will be important. Housing is such a personal and important and reflective decision and I think we need to know a lot more about that. So through the panel and the decision process, we're trying to collect even more data in those initial conversations to ensure that we're providing people in this room and people who are interested in building new SDA, with information that will enable them to build something that is reflective of what our communities want rather than reflective of where people live at the moment.

**LUKE BO'SHER:** Excellent, that's great.

(Applause):

**ANTONIA ALBANESE:** Thank you.

**LUKE BO'SHER:** Pleasure, thanks, Antonia and I think that that gives some good examples of what at a higher level role and the minister we're talking about and there's so much work happening on the ground that we see all the time from Summer Foundation's perspective, and working with the NDIA and it's great that we're able to start sharing some more of that publically, so thanks for that, Antonia.

So, Cameron, you do a range of work with government, with NDIS providers in a whole range of different contexts, can you talk to us about the theme of collaboration, which has come up throughout the day today?

From an EY perspective, what do you see as being some of the ingredients about collaboration and how do you see that working in the SDA space?

**CAMERON BIRD**

Thanks, Luke. Can people hear me?

I'll wait for the 2-second pause, there we go, and look, thanks for the opportunity to participate in today's conference, I've really enjoyed listening to all of the panellists.

Certainly, as a global professional services provider, we do, we're in the fortunate position to be able to provide, we're in the fortunate position to be able to provide support to a range of stakeholders in the sector. Whether it's actual service providers, developers, financiers, as well as working with government to support transition to the NDIA.

I think from our experience, one thing and we've had it today is collaboration is a real theme, and going forward in SDA, certainly one aspect we see is a real success factor is successful partnerships.

I think it's worth pausing on what we mean by that. I think and we've seen some of those partnerships there today, there are financier groups who are forming partnerships with actual service providers, with developers and so on and in the context of a very complex scheme. This is essential to achieve success, you have providers who have for example, a real strong understanding of what some people's needs are, whereas some other parts of the sector, say developers and financiers, thank you, can everybody hear me okay? No? How's that? Okay, yeah, so providers have a very strong understanding of participants' needs, however, what we've also seen though are some property funds or developers and financiers who definitely have willingness to participate in the scheme and even have a for-purpose strategy to support it from a social perspective, but have a limited understanding of what's required. So, forming really close partnerships is really key, and that's formalising through whether it's joint ventures or other alliance structures we've seen as a real success factor. And what you would have seen is some of those parties who have made real progress in really pushing forward in solutions in the SDA space, that's been a real key ingredient.

In terms of achieving social outcomes, one thing we've also seen that's important is to look beyond the financial model, there's always a lot of talk around yields and costly development and things like that that ultimately, it's the factors beyond that to deliver success, so really focusing on outcomes for the participants and driving that focus through the feasibility process has been really important.

**LUKE BO'SHER:** Excellent, great, thank you very much, Cameron.

So, Mike, you come from the Property Council, so you represent a whole bunch of members of which we, I don't think we've had any kind of talk throughout the day today, so the property sector's been kind of one of the gaps in our agenda today. So, I was interested to hear from you around the people in the room who are really keen to see specialist disability accommodation built, how do you think they should be working with your members at the Property Council to be able to achieve those kind of outcomes?

**MIKE ZORBAS**

Look, it is, it's a great question, can everyone hear me? Can anyone not hear me?

You can't hear me up the back, should I ditch this and, all right, okay, good, good, that was an affirmation.

Yeah, so the Property Council, as some of you would know represents the 2300 odd leading players in the property industry and that is across every asset class that you can think of. Retail, residential, office space, some of them are builders, some of them do roads and rail, there's a lot of retirement living and this conference, I think, is a very important one and one which we would like to be involved with certainly going forward.

You guys have made a very good start I think, nascent start in the last year or so engaging with us, you have some natural connection in to our industry through a couple of experts here. My friend, Dan McLennan, I think you heard from him before, so there is good, natural alignment there. We're very keen to support SDA, we're very keen to support the regulatory environment obviously. The Property Council is an advocate for its members' interests, it spends a lot of time in Canberra and around the parliaments of the nation, and clearly, we'd be very happy to work with you on all of that. We also reach 70 or 80 thousand of our 4

constituents every week through our various communication channels. So really keen to get your online resources out there. I think clearly, one of the challenges for property developers is doing the right thing in this space. And doing the right thing in this space involves understanding what is required and what is expected. So very keen to engage in a partnership around educating people and also about advocating for the best possible outcomes from governments and oppositions.

**LUKE BO'SHER:** Excellent, great, thanks very much, Mike.

So Chris, turning to you, Suncorp's a big organisation that does a lot of work in the community, can you kind of zoom out a little bit from SDA and talk a bit more broadly about the role of organisations and corporations like Suncorp in creating social good in the community?

**CHRIS McHUGH**

Okay, so Suncorp, many of you may not know, but we are actually the largest personal injury insurer in Australia and for anyone who's sort of catastrophically or otherwise sort of injured in a motor accident or in the workplace, we're actively involved in rehabilitating and supporting those people. And many of those people are catastrophically injured either on the road or in the workplace, so there's obviously a very immediate connect there. And I think from our perspective, there are probably a couple of observations that we have made over the years and that has shaped our philosophy and to the broader macro, what our role is and what role we need to be playing in the community and particularly in this space. And I guess the 2 observations we have made is that for schemes such as CTP, many people don't know that a lot of people who are catastrophically injured in these accidents aren't actually covered, at false schemes. So, people are often left without the appropriate support and rehabilitation and care that they require. And the other observation is that where we come in and see those events where somebody is covered under insurance and when somebody isn't, the level of support and outcomes for those individuals is starkly different. And I guess from an outcome perspective, and from an inequity view, we feel that that's something which has to change. So as a result, we have been actively engaged not only just in our day-to-day role in rehabilitating and helping people recover from an injury, but trying to shape the nature of schemes to improve people's access to the appropriate care and support. So, we've been actively involved in the development of the NDIS from its very beginnings. We're actively involved in state-based schemes in looking to reform those and change the benefit structure to ensure that people have the appropriate care and support, whether they're at fault or not. So from the advocacy perspective, from the perspective of shaping public policy and ensuring that people have the appropriate care and support, that is a critical role for an organisation such as ours, and we believe that some of what we need to support, as it relates to appropriate housing and obviously, that's not our operating environment and that's not what we do. But what we do do is we partner with organisations like Youngcare because it's a critical component in this ecosystem. So, we look to support and partner with organisations that equally have that agenda to drive advocacy, to drive research and improve people's access to ultimately reintegrate and provide better care and support across the community.

So, our role is very much day-to-day actively involved in it, but we absolutely have a role broadly to improve both public policy and the approach that everyone in this environment sort of takes to including outcomes for the people particularly with long term care needs.

**LUKE BO'SHER:** Great, excellent, thanks very much for that, Chris. I guess in that, in those remarks Chris, you kind of talked about kind of thinking beyond just NDIS and where we are and talked a bit about other types of compensation and how they think about supporting people with catastrophic injury, I guess so going to you, Bruce, you've obviously been very involved in the NDIS for a very long time. Right from the disability investment group, thinking about the design phase of the NDIS with government and the productivity commission and obviously at the NDIA and now at Melbourne University, can you give a few reflections on what SDA should look like to make sure that it does work for everyone, and also to make sure that it works for the scheme within the parameters that we've set up for the scheme?

**BRUCE BONYHADY**

Yeah, look, I think I suppose the way I would frame this is that we have to make sure that all NDIS participants can live in homes of their choice.

That's I think the starting point and SDA and all the other vehicles of mechanisms that we're talking about are just paths to that particular solution, that opportunity that I think we had at the start of the NDIS and is still there for all of the participants.

So that I think sort of frames this, I think the second point I just want to make is that we've come a long way. I think it was 8 years ago that around 1000 people gathered in this particular room to campaign for the NDIS, so now we've got 400 people in this room talking about the very specific issue of SDA, which is a subset of housing, so the interest and the momentum is enormous.

I think when it comes to those people who are eligible for SDA; there are 3 things that are most important.

The first is that SDA, which is a financing mechanism, translates in to homes, so it's a path to a solution to them, there are other aspects of that and I'll touch on that in a moment.

The second thing is that we need to make sure that SDA funding is absolutely aligned with the ambitions of the scheme, which is to maximise the independence of each individual, maximise their lifetime opportunities and minimise their costs for the scheme and that they have quality lives. So, we have to make sure that it builds human capital and we've heard some great stories about that today, but I suspect that they're just the tip and what we need to make sure is that those stories apply to every SDA recipient, not just the most exceptional stories.

The second thing is that, or the third thing I should say in relation to SDA funding and how it works is that we need to make sure that it builds social capital because quality lives require a combination of a home to live in, government-funded supports to support that living arrangement, and family and friends and community. So, SDA needs to contribute to a much more of an inclusive community and building the social capital, the friendship networks around those individuals and in that way, we also contribute to the sustainability of the scheme.

But we cannot do, provide SDA to some recipients, beneficiaries of the scheme, some participants in the scheme and then just assume that nothing, we don't need to do anything for the other 94%. Which is why we at Melbourne University are just focusing on building and identifying solutions for people who won't be eligible for SDA and the reason we think that's important is it goes to the heart of the equity of the scheme. And we think there are some extraordinary opportunities to build solutions bottom up, community-by-community so that may be a geographic community, it might be a cultural community or it could be a community that's grown up around a friendship group, a school or around a service provider. So, we believe that we need to build from the bottom up to provide opportunities for people to find the solutions that work for them.

If we don't do that, then the scheme will not be sustainable because everyone who wants a housing solution will be looking for SDA as the only solution. So, one of my messages to the SDA providers is that if you want SDA to be sustainable, then you need to think about how you're going to contribute to the solution for the non-SDA recipients, because in the absence of that, this scheme is not sustainable.

The third element I think is building the support arrangements side by side with the physical structures that people live in and we need to think much more creatively about that.

Marina Walker, in the last session, talked about some of the innovative solutions in Western Australia that have become commonplace in WA, and now need to be imported nationally. And my final point is that what's happening to housing for people who are NDIS participants sits within a much broader policy framework around affordable housing and the housing code in terms of the building code.

If we don't get a proper well-resourced national housing strategy and without adjustments to the building code that makes accessible housing mandatory, we will not be able to, or I believe we won't be able to adequately house the 94% who are not, who are not going to be eligible for SDA. Thank you.

(Applause):

**LUKE BO'SHER:** Great, thank you, Bruce.

I think that that provides a really good final kind of conclusion from the panel when it comes to the future of SDA, being able to think about SDA alongside what happens for the 94%.

So in kind of summing up our panel today, we're keen for any words of wisdom or words of advice from the panel to people in the room who are on this SDA journey or looking to embark on that, whether they're a participant or a provider or another stakeholder, you already kind of had a couple in your remarks, Bruce, but did you have anything else you wanted to share around kind of words of advice you have for people who are on this journey around SDA.

**BRUCE BONYHADY:** Look, I suppose my only other word of advice for people who are on a journey to a home, whether it be SDA or however it's funded, is that we need to collect the data to create the evidence to support the solutions that each and every one is coming up with and then use that evidence to ensure that the policies that are being set are as facilitating of those solutions as possible.

In order to do that, I think it's really essential that the sector share and collaborate and focus on building public value as well as building private returns to those who are investing in SDA and in other forms of housing.

We must make sure that the value is created side by side with that private value.

Speaker: Okay, thanks, Bruce.

(Applause):

**LUKE BO'SHER:** I'm going to kind of work our way back down to Antonia, so Chris, did you have any advice for people on SDA?

**CHRIS McHUGH:** Yeah, look, I think more around supporting sort of Bruce's position, it'd be remiss of me from the insurance company, not to sort of focus on the 'I' in the NDIS, but ultimately, that the principles around insurance around sustainability and ensuring that we have sort of a sustainable scheme that is able to sort of grow, prosper and deliver outcomes in a very sort of customer centric manner and I think that many of those elements have been sort of discussed and reflected in the forums today, so I think for me, it is really I was going to comment on this notion around scheme participants operating outside of just sort of what they're trying to achieve and recognising that they are part of a scheme that is probably at the very beginnings of its development. So for it to be successful, absolutely, people need to operate as part of a system and sort of really understand sort of what their role and contribution, not only to their own objectives are, but obviously, think more broadly about the contribution they made to ensuring sustainability of the scheme and that is for both participants and for users of the scheme to understand what is sustainable and what is appropriate, so I think if everyone approaches it with that mindset, we're far more likely to be successful in the longer term.

**LUKE BO'SHER:** Okay, thank you.

(Applause):

**MIKE ZORBAS:** Well, at the risk of being horribly derivative, I completely agree with the gentleman on my left and merely reiterate the offer to collaborate and go forward.

**LUKE BO'SHER:** Great, thank you.

**MIKE ZORBAS:** Certainly, when I think about the future, I think we probably want to agree, ultimately, we want to have a range and a variety of homes available to people with disability and the question is how can we get there as soon as possible?

Certainly, one thing that does come to mind is innovation and we talk about it a lot, I think it means different things to different people.

Ultimately, innovation is really hard, it's very tough. It's about looking at things from a different perspective and changing the way you might have been doing something for a long time and probably talking about the providers and suppliers of SDA. So, certainly embracing innovation, and as I say, I am hearing a lot more and that's being comfortable with being uncomfortable, and that's looking at things differently, keeping in mind to think about different ways to approach things so we can move quickly, and partnerships is part of that as



well. Different ownership models, different financing structures, so that's something certainly as a global organisation to look to encourage and even support organisations to achieve.

**ANTONIA ALBANESE:** Well, done. I think I'm probably the last person to give anyone advice, I'm so new to this sector, so I'd hate to sort of speak on behalf of others who have trod this path far longer than I, and I think I'm happy to take advice now if anyone is willing to give it. But one of the things I sort of tell myself is we've really just got to hold ourselves accountable and aim higher. And I think we've got to think about the amazing legacy that we will leave with this infrastructure.

If we support and build properties and homes and houses that transform lives, wouldn't we all just be so proud of that. And I think that's what makes me get up every day, it's not the processes or any of those things, but the challenge to do better and I think throw that out to everybody, it's not really advice, it's what I tell myself. We've just got to hold ourselves accountable and make sure we're aiming as high as possible because this stuff really does matter.

**LUKE BO'SHER:** Great, thanks, Antonia.

(Applause):

**LUKE BO'SHER:** Can I maybe ask you a follow up question to that, Antonia?

**ANTONIA ALBANESE:** I always get picked on, always, every time.

**LUKE BO'SHER:** Well, this is where the question goes, so people at the agency trying to do their best, trying to make the scheme work and then doing really well at that and better over time, people in this room trying to do their best, make SDA work, make the scheme work, get good outcomes for people with disability, what advice do you have for us about how we work with the NDIA? How do we build that relationship? Dan in his presentation talked about that relationship-building with the NDIA being really critical to success, what message do you have for people around how you think that we can help the NDIA to deliver the scheme?

**ANTONIA ALBANESE:** Yeah, it's a really good question and I think something I reflected on a lot when I first joined the agency because I felt there was just so much animosity and I think, not misguided in a lot of ways. I think the agency had faced a lot of criticism and it's a mammoth task. I work with amazing people, there's a legacy of amazing people before me who are really just trying to do their very, very best with what is an extremely challenging reform. It's something that's not being done on this scale before, so really tricky stuff and if I think about SDA, relatively new, right, so we've made some mistakes along the journey, but with most new things you do, you learn along the way, so a bit of patience goes a long way. And I think by the time I started, a lot of people had run out of patience and I copped a bit of the brunt of that in some of the early meetings. But I think what will get us back on track and keep us on track is having really honest conversations, so we appreciate the feedback, we need to accept it and take it on and do better, I think. And I think the sector can support us too, in understanding that we're trying to get it right, we won't always get it right, but if we are open with each other, I think we've got a much better chance of getting there.

**LUKE BO'SHER:** great, that's excellent, thank you so much.

(Applause):

**LUKE BO'SHER:** Thanks, Antonia.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**