

National Conference FRAMEWORK REVIEW

(Applause):

Good morning, everybody.

I would also like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land we meet on today and pay my respects to them and their culture and to elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge any Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people here with us today.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of all the people in this room, their energy, their commitment, their passion and their sense of optimism and hope for bringing us to where we are today on SDA, and giving us a sense of what the future could look like.

As a policy maker, and I know the same would apply to Rob as the person responsible for the administration of the NDIS. We depend on the energy and the wisdom, and the knowledge and the experiences of people in the community. Of advocates, of people who will enable us to realise the potential of the NDIS, so all your contributions are really important to us.

We couldn't do what we do without the momentum and the knowledge that you bring and share with us as we try and wrestle with the policy, challenges of the NDIS and of the SDA in particular. So I'm here today to talk about the SDA pricing and payments framework review, which is a very exciting title.

It's sometimes referred to as the KPMG report; I won't talk about what's already been achieved and what the next steps are for reports.

As we've heard already from Mr De Luca, SDA is expected to be a significant part of the NDIS, a significant expenditure at full scheme, and a critical support for an important group of participants.

The SDA is very much what the NDIS is about; it's very much a part of realising the vision of the NDIS.

As many of you people in this room today know, and have experienced personally, SDA can be transformational.

SDA gives eligible participants with disability the opportunity to maximise some independence and have real choice and control over the way they live.

It helps participants to live with privacy, dignity and independence.

It can also help participants connect with community and employers.

I remember talking with one person who had recently moved in to an SDA property and one of the things she said was, "now I'm living here, I'll have to come up with a new goal", and that's what the NDIS is about.

It is about giving people the stepping-stones to seek goals, to achieve what they want to achieve in their lives.

SDA, as the Minister has also pointed out, will help younger people out of residential aged care.

As the Minister said, there are six thousand people under the age of 65 living in residential aged care, 200 under 45, and only a fraction of those people who leave, at the moment, to move to a family home or to a dwelling which meets their needs.

Making more SDA properties available will help young people get out of residential aged care and live ordinary lives. So that will present new challenges for the new SDA market, and challenges that we need to think about how to meet. And the goals that the minister has set, I guess provide a context for us to embrace those challenges.

As you'll be aware, the Disability Reform Council commissioned a review of the SDA pricing of payments framework last year. And the government has already made significant improvements to SDA, based on the recommendations of the review and the minister talked about these earlier. These changes provide certainty to participants about the long-term nature of SDA funding under the NDIS, and the changes will also help stimulate construction and more SDA dwellings, creating more housing options for SDA participants.

The SDA market is new and still developing with only 12% of the current SDA stock newly built or refurbished buildings. As we heard this morning, in the Social Venues Australia and Summer Foundation report, interest in SDA from investors is substantial with new dwellings under construction, expected to deliver 1,500 additional SDA places by early 2020.

This is an encouraging start, but there's still more work that needs to be done.

We anticipate that the rule changes, that the Disability Reform Council has agreed to, will put SDA funding in participants' plans sooner, to drive further growth in the SDA sector, And with that, there will be more opportunities for participants with SDA in their plans to go shopping for housing in the same way as other people can go shopping for housing.

So there was also, in the government response to the SDA framework review, an indication there would be a second stage of reforms of SDA to be implemented later in 2019 and a key focus of this next stage of reforms is to enable SDA participants to choose not just where they live, but who they live with.

The SDA rules, in their current form, they have a number of tenancy restrictions that were originally intended to safeguard participants and prevent overcrowding in group homes.

For example, under existing rules, each resident in the property must have their own bedroom and the majority of bedrooms must be built to an SDA standard. But unfortunately, these restrictions have the unintended consequence of making it difficult for SDA participants to live with partners, family and other people they choose to live with.

The review recommended introducing greater flexibility in to the rules. For SDA participants to live in SDA dwellings with people who are not eligible for SDA themselves. And the government has committed to developing a new SDA rule that introduces this flexibility and takes in to account, different family structures of living arrangements, while maintaining the safeguards we need to have.

This flexibility's important for participants in SDA being able to realise the promise of the NDIS, and to achieve their own goals as NDIS participants.

Of course, a participant's support needs and goals will change and evolve through the course of their life, and the NDIS and SDA has to support this as well.

Moreover, each person who is SDA-eligible is different, so SDA properties need to reflect this diversity. And as we move forward, SDA offers new ways of living independently and it'll be important for us to consider what participants need to succeed in SDA.

It will be essential for us to listen to the experiences of those who've already begun their SDA journey. About what supports should be in place and how we can keep improving SDA to meet the needs of participants.

Over the coming months, we will be taking the time to test and discuss these reforms with stakeholders. They're important reforms and with the potential for substantial impact on the lives of SDA participants. Consultation with experts, with stakeholders, with participants takes time, but it will be key to getting these reforms right.

The conversation won't stop with these reforms, though. We are committed to having an ongoing conversation about best policy settings for SDA.

I look forward to seeing the benefits of these reforms will have in the lives of SDA participants and their families as SDA grows over the coming years. I look forward to hearing from the rest of the presenters today about what's on the horizon for the SDA market and what more we can look forward to in this exciting part of the NDIS journey. Thanks very much.

(Applause)

END OF TRANSCRIPT