



Mental Health Carers NSW

RESPONSE TO MEDIA REPORT

August 29, 2025

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY FACE COMPOUNDED BARRIERS IN AUSTRALIA'S HOUSING CRISIS

In response to the **ABC Four Corners** investigation into Australia's housing crisis, **Mental Health Carers NSW** is calling for urgent reform to address the specific challenges faced by people with disability in accessing safe, secure, and appropriate housing and to drastically address the commodification of the Australian disability housing market and disability support under the NDIS in general.

The Four Corners Report highlighted that the Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) system is not fit-for-purpose and has become a vehicle for investors. This was a scheme intended to provide tailored housing options for eligible NDIS participants. Now, it has become just another example of the commodification of people with disability as assets. The Four Corners report showed that marketing SDA investment has focused on it being a scheme that will "get you through to the best schools in Australia; help people pay off their mortgage in record time". This sells Australians desperate to buy into the Australian Dream a falsehood – but one that impacts people with disability far more than it does property investors.

What the report showed was that the SDA can be monopolized by people with financial means but little to no knowledge of disability care. These homes might be fit for negative gearing, but they are not fit for use by people with disabilities. One example given of a 'high-quality' home for a person with 'profound disability' showed a door to a courtyard that opened inwards and thus could not be used by someone in a wheelchair. Some empty properties are nowhere near required disability support services and are therefore effectively inaccessible. By purchasing or building SDA housing primarily to extract generous rents through the NDIS, these investors now require – to put it simply – a subsidy on their investment losses, even while the government is cracking down on access to the NDIS and cutting the size of support packages for people with disability to save costs. What this shows is that housing should never have been sold to private enterprise as an investment.

This is just one example of how fully privatized systems like the NDIS serve neither the people they are meant to support, nor the people induced to invest in them. They are fundamentally financially unsustainable. The answer is to review these schemes to

Mental Health Carers NSW Inc. (MHCN)

Funded by the NSW Ministry of Health

Suite 2.03, Level 2, 3 Spring St, Sydney NSW 2000

P: (02) 9332 0777

W: www.mentalhealthcarersnsw.org

E: MHCNadmin@mentalhealthcarersnsw.org

understand what can efficiently be provided by private enterprises and what needs to be delivered by the government to contain costs and ensure that people with disabilities get the support they need. Cutting the supports people are entitled too to financially balance these schemes, as we are seeing under the NDIS 'reforms', is grossly unfair and will not create a financially sustainable disability support system.

Instead, governments need to improve their management of these programs and take on the provision of key strategic elements that experience has now demonstrated cannot be efficiently provided by private enterprises.

"People with disability deserve more than a roof and four walls. They deserve homes that are safe and accessible, and usable by them, not merely effective tax breaks for investors" said Jonathan Harms, CEO of Mental Health Carers NSW.

"Housing is a human right, but the system is leaving people behind by focusing on supporting private enterprise when it should be ensuring the efficient government management of public money and the safeguarding of disability housing and the people who need to use it".

For enquiries and additional information, please contact:

Jonathan Harms, CEO

Jonathan.harms@mentalhealthcarersnsw.org

Dr Alyce Cannon, Policy & Research Coordinator (Psychosocial Disability)

Alyce.cannon@mentalhealthcarersnsw.org