

NEXUS INK

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Thank you to all those who have contributed to this edition of Nexus Ink.

Special Accommodation Edition

Inside we'll tell you about a new housing deal we have agreed to, our CEO Mark is out in the cold and we'll unpack accommodation under the NDIS. We'll also give you a sneak peak of our accommodation vacancies that we have coming up.

CEO out in the Cold

Mark is participating in the Vinnies CEO Sleep Out in Launceston this week. The event is designed to raise funds and awareness of homelessness. Mark decided to participate because of some recent dealings with people with a disability who were at risk of homelessness and to remind us that people with a disability are particularly vulnerable.

Nexus has recently been supporting three people with a disability who have NDIS funds for supported independent living (SIL) but cannot access housing. They have been living in hostels, shelters and in housing where their safety and rights have been compromised.

About a quarter of people in the NDIS will live in social housing ('public housing') which is provided by the State or Community Sector for people on low incomes. Many people with a disability rely on their pension and maybe a very small amount of additional income from disability employment – so they need this type of housing support.

Help Mark raise the profile of housing for people with a disability by sponsoring him at <https://www.ceosleepout.org.au/> - type Mark Jessop into the Donate box.



Nexus Co-Designs new housing

For the past six months Nexus has been working with CatholicCare on some new housing for our clients. CatholicCare is a major social housing property developer in Tasmania and has significant expertise in this field. With the help of an Australian Government grant they were working on developing some new supported accommodation houses.

A couple of years ago the Nexus Board considered building our own properties, but decided it was more effective to partner with organisations with housing expertise. Starting this co-design process with CatholicCare will ensure that experts are building the projects, but Nexus expertise is ensuring the new houses are fit homes for our clients.

Alison Hodges, our Nexus Client Services Manager, has spent many hours with the CatholicCare team and their builders, Wilson Homes, to ensure the new building would not only be great homes but will also be safe and welcoming places for our staff to work.



Alison very excited about the new house.

The key to the process was for Alison to talk to families

and supporters to identify a group of clients who might want to move in and then plan the buildings to meet their needs. Nexus was able to factor in some key changes to the way the building was laid out as well as planning for additional services that were needed. As strange as it seems, even little things like having more 15amp power points will make life easier and safer when charging client wheel chairs. Nexus also committed to an additional cost of over \$20,000 per house to include ceiling tracking, so the builders could plan for this in construction.

Our CEO and Alison met on site last week with Tim Gourlay, Executive

Director of CatholicCare Tasmania to inspect the properties and announce that Nexus would be leasing the two properties on behalf of clients.



The properties are at Allunga and Abbotsfield Roads in Chigwell and we hope to be moving in by October.



NDIS accommodation unpacked

This is certainly a confusing space – the NDIS that is, and accommodation is even more so.

People with a disability living in supported accommodation have always separated their cost of living (which they pay) from support (which government pays).

Client costs include things like rent, power, food, medication, their personal spending, clothing, transport. The old State system would pay for staff, Nexus administration costs, specialist equipment and make a contribution to vehicle capital costs. The funding was provided on a house by house basis and tended not to focus on the individual needs of each resident but the collective need of the house.

Under the old State system, residential accommodation was also reserved for those most in need and generally you would not be able enter a group home unless you had very high needs relative to all people with a disability. Other funding sources, such as Individual Support Packages (ISP) would fund supports in a person's own home.

In the land of the NDIS, similar themes have continued. The key components of NDIS accommodation funding are:

- A component called Supported Independent Living (SIL) funds the staff support in the home. Nexus needs to quote for each person in the house so there is an improved focus on the staffing needs of each individual in the house – not just the house as a single unit. For example if someone needs an extra worker to support them during personal care this is now likely to be funded. This is certainly an improvement under the NDIS.
- Client contributions are still required and they still pay for their rent, food and personal items. There are some bonuses for clients who need continence aids which are now part of the plan and are generally fully funded. The approach for funding specialist equipment looks a bit clearer, but we are hearing that there have been some unacceptable delays in getting approval.
- Transport is a bit more complicated. Under NDIS participants have lost

their Mobility Allowance (paid with their pension) and this has been replaced by a Transport component of their NDIS plan. In our view the old State contribution to vehicles has not been replaced and this puts pressure on clients to fund their own vehicles. Unfortunately participants in shared accommodation are not able to access NDIS funds for vehicle modifications. A wheel chair accessible vehicle can cost between \$80-100,000.



Adrian has become our master of the SIL quote - but there is a lot of information for him to process—so much so that secret santa will need a bigger hat next year!

So all in all is accommodation better off under NDIS? Nexus would say YES. Current clients are getting more individualised supports and people who would not have got accommodation support under the State system are now accessing services. Transport however is still unresolved.

Ross at the Tasman Peninsula

Living in supported accommodation also means having the right to get out and do your own thing.



What is Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)?

SDA is separate to someone's support funding (through SIL) and it pays for building accommodation for people who need specialist disability housing. Sounds good – sure does. The fine print is a little more complicated.

A person can have SIL funding but not need specialist disability accommodation. In fact, the NDIS estimates that only 6% of NDIS Plans will include SDA funding. SDA will be reserved for people who need very high levels of support – like a high level of physical support (eg modified bathrooms, tracking for hoists etc) and a level of “robust” build for clients who might damage their housing.

The important distinction is that the 25% or so who need to access social housing will not have their housing provided by the NDIS under SDA funding. They might however be eligible for staff support to help them live in this housing (ie they might be eligible for SIL). Confused?

The whole point of separating houses and support is to encourage people with a disability to have greater choice and control over the way they live.

However, the challenge facing Tasmanians' with a disability is that social housing is State funded and people with a disability will have to access social housing along with all other people in need. Currently we also know that many Tasmanian's are in housing crisis. Before the current crisis hit the press, Nexus had been successful in finding social housing for some young people with a disability, but in the current climate this is much more difficult.

A person who is maybe in their 30's and living at home but wants to move out is very unlikely to be even considered as having a housing need, let alone get on a priority list through public housing services. They are just not in “crisis”. The fact that they have a right to live like everyone else and now have the access to SIL funding to do it simply does not cut the mustard in terms of crisis housing.

However, there is a possible light at the end of the tunnel. In a recent

meeting I attended with Disability Minister Jacquie Petrusma, she did foreshadow that she had been working with her colleague Roger Jaensch to ensure an adequate focus on housing for people with a disability.

It was great news to see this documented in the State Budget released last week which quarantined \$20 million over three years for accessible homes for people living with disability. This commitment will go some of the way toward addressing the hidden housing crisis for people with a disability. Nexus also notes that the new Department of Communities Tasmania put their first responsibility as:

“funding a range of accommodation and support services aimed at enhancing the quality of life for people with disability as well as support and assistance through the National Disability Insurance Scheme”.

So unfortunately, the situation for supporting people with a disability into accommodation is not clear cut at this point in time, despite some very positive options.

The Disability Reform Council has commissioned KPMG to carry out a review of the SDA framework. I attended a consultation session last week and was able to contribute to this review. Anyone can contribute at <https://engage.dss.gov.au/sda-review/>.

Mark & Josh

A little bit of old news now, but we managed to catch up with the opposition disability spokes person, Josh Willie MLC. Josh has a background in education prior to entering politics and understands disability from this perspective. It was good



to be able to discuss some of the issues facing Nexus under the transition to the NDIS and keep him up to date with life at the coal face.

Nexus Vacancies

So with all of the new buildings that Alison has been designing we have some vacancies coming up.

New Town - October

We are creating a "share home" style home for 4 younger people with higher capacity who still need some mentoring and support. The house will have a sleep over shift but clients will be able to really take control of their own lives in this house.

Glenorchy - October

A high support home with tracking and equipment for people with high physical needs. A number of vacancies will exist in this 4 person group home style house. The house will have a sleep over or wake shift (depending on client needs) and standard two staff roster with additional staff for high support times.

Austin's Ferry - October

A traditional style group home in a lovely sunny suburban setting. The house is well appointed and is ideal for clients who need a little more support but not a high level of physical support. The house will have a sleep over and standard two staff roster.

Glenorchy - January

Nexus has secured a number of new one and two bedroom units and plans to continue our support for people wanting to live more independently in the community. The units will have a shared sleep over staff member and rostered staff to provide drop in support, coaching and mentoring.

If you are interested in any of these vacancies call Adrian, Alison or Mark on 6240 5000.

For article ideas or contributions, or for copies of this newsletter, contact Kallissa in the office - 6240 5000