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Media Release

Changes to NDIS Supported Independent Living must not leave people with disability worse off

Inclusion Australia is concerned about announcements this week about changes to home and living supports, and in particular changes to Supported Independent Living (or SIL) for people with disability who use the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

As the national peak body for people with an intellectual disability and their families, we welcome discussion and actions to improve NDIS systems and processes and make it easier for people with disabilities to access the supports they need to live their lives.

However, any changes must reflect the very real challenges experienced by people with disability and be developed in partnership with the disability community to avoid leaving people without essential supports.

SIL is a primary support for people with an intellectual disability. This includes many people who have been institutionalised all their life and those who have complex support needs. These are the very people the NDIS was designed to support.

We and other disability representative organisations are regularly hearing anecdotal reports around cuts to SIL in people's NDIS packages. We are naturally cautious that the changes to SIL are being rushed through in a climate of ongoing concerns expressed by the Government and the National Disability Insurance Agency about scheme sustainability and reducing costs.

This should not be the driver for change, nor should announcements that fit in with the election cycle.

We are also concerned about the move to 'step down' or reduce the supports for people with disability where they live.

Inclusion Australia CEO Catherine McAlpine said "Whilst we believe there is a sincerity to make the scheme work better, we fear that these changes are being rushed through. We do not wish to see changes that will mean people are left with insufficient supports. This will lead services to cut corners and will result in a decrease in the freedoms and rights of people with disability.

"We also want to see more consideration of other safeguards people need, including funded independent support for decision-making that ensure people are not being forced into making 'choices' against their best interests."

It is also critical that other parts of the system work to support the aims of the NDIS. People with disability are part of the broader Australian community. Inclusion Australia calls for all states and territories to increase the range of accessible, social and public housing options. Without this, people 'stepping down' from SIL to an Independent Living Options (ILO) package will end up languishing in dangerous and insecure accommodation such as boarding houses.

Scheme sustainability is vital to the success of the NDIS. However, changes must be co-designed and implemented in partnership with scheme participants and disabled peoples organisations. To do otherwise only creates new problems and puts the lives of people with disability at risk.

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Related links: www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/improving-ndis/improvements-home-and-living-supports/making-sil-better

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Inclusion Australia is the national voice for people with intellectual disability and their families.