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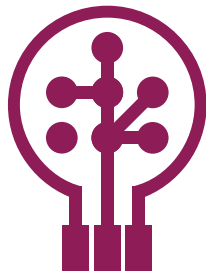
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**ACHIEVE
ASSIST**





MYVIEW

ANNE BRYCE, CEO ACHIEVE AUSTRALIA

It has been more than a year since the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) began its rollout in Sydney. It is now being progressively introduced across regional and remote areas of NSW.

This is an appropriate time to examine what we have learned so far. What are the NDIS hits and misses? And what needs to happen next?

Based on my long sector experience and exposure to the NDIS as a service provider, I have no doubt that this Scheme is making huge improvements in disability support funding and provision. However this transition has thrown up many challenges so far, and more lie ahead.

There have been painful issues with logistics – such as difficulties in accessing, navigating and using the NDIS online portal. There are also ongoing problems with obtaining clear information and policy guidelines, and accessing funding once it is approved.

Last year a breakdown in the NDIS payment system left both providers and participants unpaid. It was only the commitment and goodwill of providers which maintained critical support for people with disability over that time. Now, at the end of 2017, payments to providers like Achieve remain in arrears.

Quality and frequency of information remains an issue – along with difficulty in contacting planners and frequent changes in NDIS requirements and procedures. NDIS staff are frequently unable to give definitive and consistent answers to questions – particularly about the outcomes of assessments and changes in funding.

These issues have driven a dramatic increase in complaints about the NDIS to the Commonwealth Ombudsman over the past financial year. There were 429 complaints in 2016-17, a big jump from 62 in 2015-16.

NDIS participants are understandably concerned when they cannot contact planners, obtain the appointments they need, have access to vital information, or must ‘meet’ with planners by phone rather than face-to-face.

In October, the Productivity Commission released the results of a year-long review of the NDIS to the Australian Government. The Commission’s findings include:

- The 2019-20 target for full implementation of the Scheme covering an estimated 475,000 participants is unlikely to be met.
- The NDIS is struggling to meet actual

volume of demand, let alone the projected uptake.

- Skills shortages and other disability sector price pressures could force up costs, making the Scheme less financially viable.

The Commission estimates that the National Disability Insurance Agency needs to process 500 support plans a day, and

While we should celebrate and congratulate the NDIA on this result, all of us in the disability sector need to work with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to address the issues experienced so far – and those looming ahead. Achieve Australia is working with the sector's peak body – National Disability Services – to support a communications

NDIS REVIEWED: HITS & MISSES

review hundreds more, to meet the target. It is currently managing only 165 per day, and even this pace risks compromising the quality of funded plans.

Clearly a balance needs to be found between volume of plans processed, understanding the genuine needs of participants, and the quality of plans approved.

A survey earlier this year of more than 2,000 participants by Every Australian Counts found 78% of people with disability can now access the same or more support than before the NDIS.

campaign highlighting how the complexity of the NDIS implementation is placing pressure on all stakeholders, including service providers.

We are all in this together. The NDIS is the single largest shift in funding and support for people with disability in our lifetimes. It is already transforming the lives of thousands of Australians.

So let's work together to ensure the NDIS becomes an effective and sustainable platform for delivering support for people with disability far into the future – perhaps even in ways we have not yet foreseen.

ROSS'S ROCKY RIDE

Gailene Massey is the sister and guardian of Ross, a 60-year-old man who has been supported by Achieve Australia and its predecessors since he was a child.

Ross now lives with his chosen roommates in an Achieve Australia accessible apartment at Crowle Estate.

“Ross was admitted to the National Disability Insurance Scheme quite easily but we experienced significant issues around his funding – it was adjusted dramatically up and down over the space of one year.

From that point of view, it has been a rocky ride.

“The funding was for some reason reassessed downwards, even after he was injured in a fall. He temporarily lost the ability to walk and he lost the ability to do quite a few things he enjoyed. After corrective surgery, he recovered most of these functions and now uses a walker.

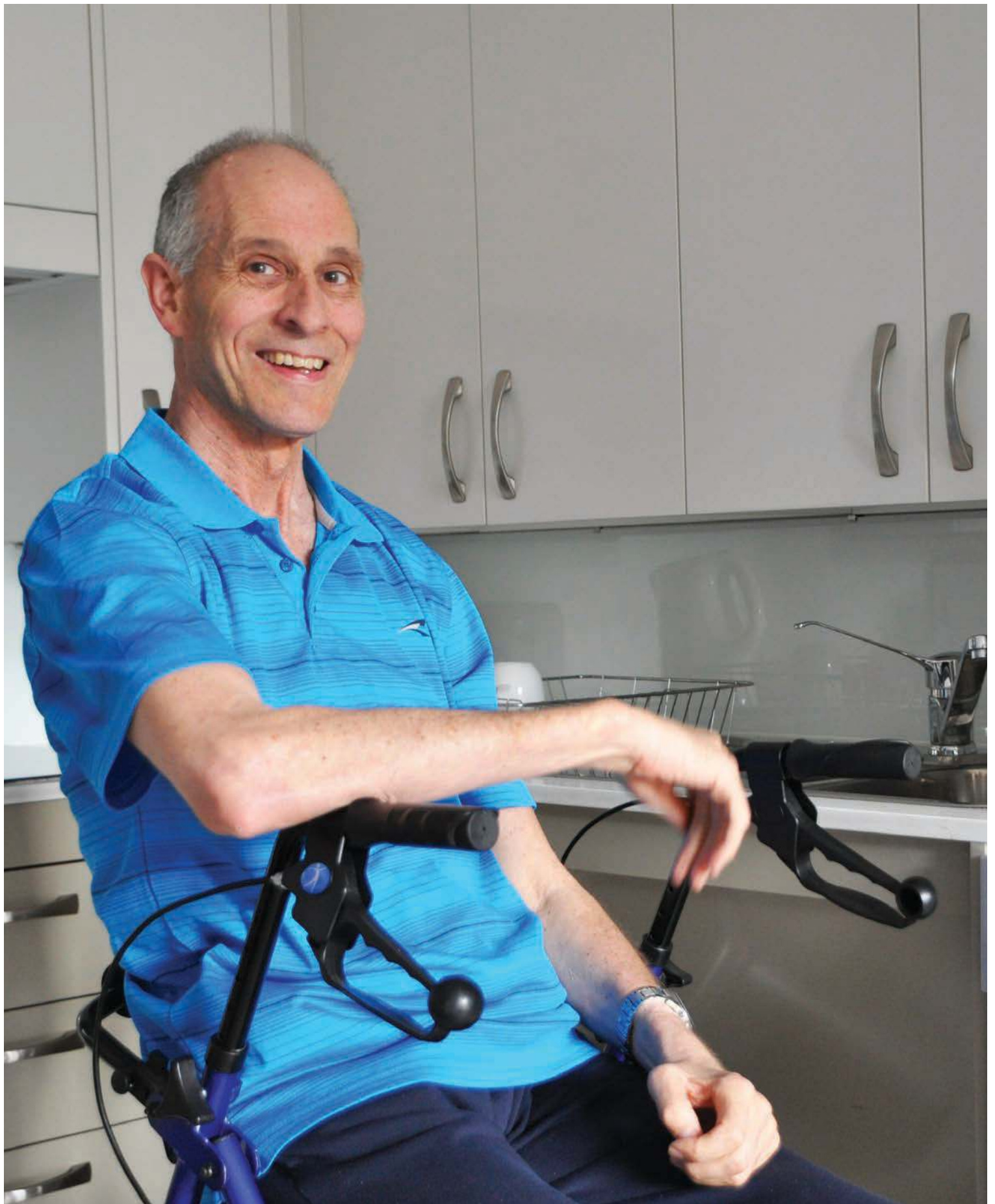
“We are working with Achieve to get the NDIA planners to restore Ross’s grading to a complex case

and upgrade his funding accordingly. We want the best for Ross, but it is hard to obtain the precise information and guidance we require.

“I understand accessing the NDIS portal has been challenging for many people, but I managed OK because I have computer experience through my job. However I can imagine it would be very challenging for older parents who are guardians of people with disability.

“First you need to have an internet connection, understand how it works, and set up a MyGov account – all before you can even try to access the portal. Even then, you often end up with an error message instead of access.

“You just have to keep trying until you get through. Then you really need to log on regularly to keep up with changes, because not all of the information available to families via the portal is accessible by providers such as Achieve. It’s important to keep up to date and have two-way sharing of information.”





“Now, one year on, we are going through the first round of annual reviews of each person’s NDIS plan.”

Achieve Australia’s My Pathways team

has been supporting families transitioning to the NDIS since the pre-planning phase early in 2016, and then through the first Sydney rollout in July of that year.

Now it is working through the first round of annual reviews in 2017. Lauren McAuliffe is a My Pathway Officer, supporting people with disability and families through their transition to the NDIS and then annual plan reviews.

“There is a great deal of unseen workload involved in supporting families and guardians as they prepare for and participate and planning meetings with the National Disability Insurance Agency,” said Lauren.

“During the first round of planning meetings, My Pathway worked with the Agency to arrange meetings grouped by community home. This enabled the Agency planners to spend all day at one house and assess the needs of multiple people we support at each location.

“Preparing for the initial round of NDIS

planning meetings included extensive coordination with Achieve’s My Home and My Wellbeing teams, other service providers, and families and guardians.

“We needed to gather detailed evidence for each person we support – including shift notes, incident reports, Behaviour Support Plans, Health Care Plans and specialist reports from primary and allied healthcare providers.

“Now, one year on, we are going through the first round of annual reviews of each person’s NDIS plan.

“That means going through the whole process **again, gathering evidence and ensuring** the NDIS has all the information it requires for each individual’s Supported Individual Living funding – comparing current plans and supports with diagnoses, support histories and individual goals.

“These planning meetings may also require the participation of Achieve Team Leaders, Community Managers and even Regional Managers, in addition to support coordinators. It’s a huge team effort,” said Lauren.



LAUREN MCAULIFFE MY PATHWAY OFFICER

Jeff Ellem, is the father and guardian of Stephen, who lives in an Achieve Australia group home in north-western Sydney.

Stephen enjoys being alone in his room and has been matched with a home and roommates who understand this and accommodate his needs.

“Our experience in moving over to the NDIS was largely positive. I think it is a matter of asking the right questions, and being firm about getting the right answers.

“Our son has an intellectual disability, limited vision and some mobility issues. It was made very clear during the NDIS planning process that Stephen requires 24/7 support, and that is what he is now funded for.

“However, we did have some issues in obtaining funding for music therapy. Music is wonderful for helping Stephen reduce stress.

“Over the years, we worked with various therapists to help find an activity which best meets Stephen’s needs. The answer turned out to be music therapy. Stephen now takes drumming lessons and this has proved an ideal way for him to vent his frustrations physically.

“During the first round of discussions with the NDIS, funding for music therapy was declined. We were told we had not put our case for this particular support ‘robustly enough’.

However, with the help of Achieve Australia’s Support Coordination and My Pathways teams we were able to make a stronger case. We are now awaiting the outcome.”



MUSIC TO THEIR EARS



Plain



Like all government initiatives, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) comes with its own alphabet of initials and abbreviations.

Once you have made the transition to the NDIS, there are two terms you really need to understand: SLA and SDA. Let's cut through the confusion. In plain language, here is what they are about.

Q: What exactly are an SLA and SDA?

A: An SLA is a Service Level Agreement. It is an agreement between you and your provider (such as Achieve Australia) specifying the delivery of the disability supports you require.

An SDA is a Specialised Disability Accommodation Agreement. It specifies the cost of the housing occupied by a person with disability, as well as ongoing costs such as maintenance.

Q: Why do I need to sign these agreements?

A: Once the NDIS was introduced, the Government stopped directly funding Achieve Australia services. That funding is now directed to each individual like you or your family member requiring support. This in turn means Achieve is now required to charge the NDIS for the services it provides to you.

In order to comply with these new NDIS business rules, we had to put in place new agreements between you and Achieve Australia to cover disability accommodation, services and supports. These two new agreements the Service Level Agreement (SLA) and Specialised Disability Accommodation Agreement (SDA Agreement) mentioned above.

Achieve Australia is committed to meeting the highest industry standards and is therefore basing its agreements on the standard contracts issued by NSW Ageing Disability and Home Care (ADHC).

Q: Do I need both an SLA and an SDA?

A: Yes, if you require both disability accommodation and Achieve's support services. The SLA covers your services and the SDA your accommodation.

The NDIS aims to maximise your choice by separating housing from support. This

allows people to change their support provider without moving house. It also enables housing funds to be attached to individuals – so they can move without losing their housing funds.

However, the NDIS is not responsible for the creation, ownership or management of housing stock for NDIS participants. The NDIA only makes housing payments to the provider – organisations like Achieve Australia – while a participant is living in the dwelling.

Your Specialist Disability Accommodation Agreement (SDA Agreement) specifically covers the cost of the housing. In addition to this funding, you are expected to make a Reasonable Rent Contribution.

Achieve Australia is required to collect this Reasonable Rent Contribution which the NDIS has set at 100% of the Commonwealth Rent Assistance supplement and 25% of the maximum Disability Support Pension. As with the NDIS, Achieve Australia collects these funds on a fortnightly basis.

Q: I thought everything was covered by the NDIS. So why will I be invoiced by Achieve Australia?

A: The NDIS covers reasonable and necessary supports for people with disability.

Under the rules of the NDIS, people with disability are still expected to make a regular contribution to their everyday cost of living. Achieve Australia has committed to bill the absolute minimum amounts set by the Scheme rules.

Under these rules, Achieve Australia must collect a contribution for transport, everyday cost of living and accommodation services, activities in which a person participates, and cost of tickets and other expenses related to everyday activities in our day programs.

Q: If I sign these Agreements, am I locked in to Achieve Australia's services?

A: Not at all. We understand that people's personal goals and needs can change over time, and your supports may need to change to enable you to achieve these goals.

The NDIS and Achieve Australia maximise participant choice by separating housing from support (so you can change your support provider without moving house) and having housing funds attached to individuals (so you can move without losing your housing funds).

Q: What action do I need to take now?

A: Sign your Service Level Agreement and Specialised Disability Accommodation Agreement and return them to Achieve Australia.

If you have not received an SLA and SDA, or have received the agreements but want to ask questions before you sign, please contact Achieve Australia immediately.

Talk to us



Telephone
My Pathway: 1300 22 44 38

Email:
MyPathway@achieveaustralia.org.au

Visit: **www.achieveaustralia.org.au**

A photograph of two kookaburra birds perched on a thin, light-colored branch. The bird on the right is facing right with its beak wide open, showing a pinkish interior. The bird on the left is facing left. Both birds have white underparts, brown upperparts with dark spots, and a dark stripe through the eye. The background is a soft-focus green and brown, suggesting a natural habitat.

**“ I SEE CROWLE
ESTATE IS
NOW OPEN”**

Crowle Estate in Meadowbank is the first development of its kind, enabling people with disability to enjoy full inclusion in the local community.

This project was developed on the former site of Achieve Australia's Crowle Home – a Large Residential Centre for people with disability. The new development includes 22 Specialist Disability Accommodation units with 36 bedrooms, scattered throughout multiple towers which incorporate 416 apartments in all.

“At Crowle, people we support have their own apartments,” said Anne Bryce, CEO of Achieve Australia. “These are homes any of us would be proud to own. This in itself is a significant step forward in the social inclusion of people with disability.”

Following development planning from 2010 to 2012, Achieve undertook the devolution of the Crowle Home and supported the transition of former residents into individualised, independent living in community homes. The Home had reached the limit of its economic and social policy life; it was no longer fit for purpose.

At the time, Achieve did not have the financial resources to fund alternative accommodation. The solution was to find a like-minded development partner to realise the potential value locked in the land.

Achieve sold the land and an approved concept plan for a medium-density residential development. The sales agreement included a buy-back of Specialised Disability Accommodation apartments distributed throughout the complex.

This strategy funded the community houses required for former residents of the Crowle Home. It also underwrote housing for an additional number of people with disability – thus providing more support, for more people, at no cost to government.

Crowle Estate is also pioneering new support models for people with disability. These innovations include all-awake shifts for Achieve disability support staff (rather than sleep-overs), a central support hub within the residential complex, and the use of assistive technology to enable peoples' dignity and independence – without compromising on safety and security.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme covers the cost of providing 24/7 support for each person living in Specialised Disability Accommodation. This cost ranges from \$125,000 to \$500,000 per year.

“We hope to prove that the scale of the Crowle site will permit us to deliver services to more people, but at a similar cost to a group home. An individual community home typically accommodates 4 or 5 people whereas we are supporting 36 people at Crowle.

“If successful, this support model will significantly reduce costs for the NDIS,” said Anne Bryce.



ACHIEVE IN ACTION: RUSSEL MASON RN

Dedicated people with a variety of skills enable Achieve Australia to deliver on the rights of people with disability to achieve meaningful and valued lives. Achieve in Action is an occasional series which explores the skills and contributions of these individuals.

Russell Mason is a Registered Nurse who has spent the past nine years providing healthcare for people supported by Achieve Australia, and acting as a resource on medical matters for front line support workers working in community homes and accessible apartments.

Russell began his career as an Enrolled Nurse following training at Prince of Wales and Prince Henry Hospitals in Sydney. He later undertook a conversion course followed by a Bachelor of Nursing Degree at Australian Catholic University to become a Registered Nurse.

“While studying at university I participated in placements at the Grosvenor Centre residential institution for adults and children with intellectual disability. My career in disability then began at Sunshine (formerly known as the Sunshine Home) which provides a variety of accommodation and support options for people with disability. What I learned early in my career has directly informed my approach to supporting people in Achieve Australia today,” said Russell.

Russell is part of a team including two full-time and one casual Registered Nurse. Although the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) does not generally fund nursing services, Achieve provides them as part of its My Wellbeing group of supports.

Other My Wellbeing clinical services include psychology and behaviour support.

Health care planning is the main focus of the Achieve nursing team. This includes reviewing the Comprehensive Health Assessment Program (CHAP) – a full medical assessment of each of more than 160 people supported in Achieve community homes, every year.

A Health Care Plan is then developed and kept updated for each person, including all medical information gathered over the previous year between health assessments. Registered Nurses work closely with front line managers and support workers – who have intimate knowledge of each person they support – to create and regularly update Health Care Plans.

Medical assessments include physical examinations, routine blood tests, eye exams and hearing tests every few years, bone density checks, and dental examinations, among others. Where required, the General Practitioners who work closely with Achieve will refer people to specialists for cardiac care, mammograms, colonoscopies, and other examinations and procedures.

Staff education is also key. Nurses ensure that front line workers are equipped with the knowledge required to attend to the daily medical needs of the people they support – such as assisting people to administer their daily medications.

Procedures requiring more specialised skills and knowledge – such as drawing blood and changing catheters – are performed in homes by Registered Nurses rather than disability support workers.

Nurses also provide support when hospitalisation is required. As soon as they are informed of an admission, they take on the role of advocate for the person supported by Achieve.

They are a conduit between the hospital and Achieve Australia, ensuring all documentation has been transferred and relaying first-hand reports from doctors and hospital nurses back to Achieve staff. Achieve’s nurses also assist in coordinating the patient’s discharge and smooth transition back to home once the treatment is completed.

“It’s a very satisfying job,” said Russell. “We can make a real contribution to maintaining and enhancing a person’s health at all stages of their life. As nurses we work with our colleagues to ensure that each individual we support has the opportunity to live well and get the most out of life.”



NEWS GAME CHANGERS

INSTALLATION OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY UNDERWAY AT CROWLE ESTATE

This technology is non-intrusive and designed to support the safety and independence of residents.

There will be no cameras or audio surveillance within apartments. The rollout of the new technology includes the establishment of a support hub to monitor all sensors and communications devices.

This hub will be staffed around the clock to ensure rapid response when help is required.

Assistive technology devices include:

- Seizure mats on beds that will detect and communicate with the support hub if seizures occur during sleep.
- In-bed mats which sense and send an alert to the support hub when a person gets out of bed. The device self-cancels when they return to bed.

- Automatic lighting that switches on when a person gets out of bed, and remains on for a set period.
- Wireless pendants that can be worn on by people with disability to automatically send an alert in case of a fall, or can be activated by the user to send an alert in case of other emergencies.
- Emergency intercoms that allow a staff member in the support hub to talk to a person when an alert is triggered. Multiple intercoms will be installed around apartments wherever voice communication may be required.
- Networked smoke detectors in each unit that trigger an alert in the support hub. This is in addition to standard smoke detectors as legislated in apartments, corridors and common areas.
- Waterproof emergency buttons positioned next to the toilet and shower for use if an emergency arises while a person is in the bathroom.

All assistive technology devices and software applications are linked via the Internet.

This avoids the need for additional cabling in apartments, and permits flexible and cost-effective installation, relocation, maintenance and upgrading of assistive technologies.



HANGERS

Wireless pendants



Networked smoke detectors



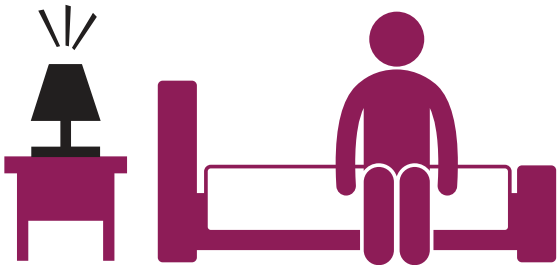
Waterproof emergency buttons



Seizure mats



Automatic lighting



Devices and apps linked via the Internet.



Emergency intercoms



Got feedback for Achieve? Use Bheard...



Achieve welcomes frank and frequent feedback from people using our services. That's why we will soon sign up with an independent telephone feedback line for consumers, carers and families.

Achieve already has a robust, internal complaints management system available for your use at any time. Bheard is another option for you.

It is an independent telephone feedback line that operates on the principle of not assigning blame, but working with callers to identify how services can be improved.

Callers can choose to remain anonymous.

We will advise you as soon as Bheard becomes available, along with the contact number and other useful information. Interpreters will be available on request. Bheard does not prevent you from using other complaint services – either external, or those already available within Achieve Australia.

For general information and to ask questions of Achieve experts, call the **Achieve Customer Engagement Help Desk on 1300 22 44 38.**



You can also use the **Online Enquiry Form on our web site at: <https://achieveaustralia.org.au/contact-us/>**

Another option is to click on the Complaint button on our web site. You will find it on the home page at: <https://achieveaustralia.org.au/>

Bheard

WINNERS ARE KNITTERS

Shop team wins NSW Volunteer of the Year Award

Volunteers who operate Achieve Australia's Fabric, Needlecraft and More Shop in Meadowbank have been honoured in the NSW Volunteer Awards. Last month the Shop team was named Volunteer Team of the Year for the Mid-Western Sydney Region and now progresses to the state finals in December.

In addition to raising funds for Achieve's support services, the shop provides training and employment opportunities for people with disability. There are many long-serving volunteers on the shop

team, including one woman who has notched up 60 years of service.

Fabric, Needlecraft and More is a shop run by needlecraft enthusiasts for needlecraft enthusiasts.



It attracts customers from schools and ballet studios making costumes, and fashion students looking for cheap but beautiful fabrics. The shop stocks entirely donated hard-to-find vintage fabrics as well as value-priced contemporary materials, patterns and equipment.

For more information visit our website: <https://achieveaustralia.org.au/social-enterprise-sydney/>

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THE EYES HAVE IT

SUPPORT COORDINATION AT WORK



So you've signed up for your first NDIS plan. What now?

So you've signed up for your first NDIS plan. What now? First, choose the services you need – and one or more providers who can deliver that support. Some people feel confident enough to undertake this themselves, but many start by choosing Support Coordination as the first service under their new plan.

Not every NDIS participant is funded for Support Coordination, but everyone can ask for it at their planning meeting. People who would like to have Support Coordination can suggest from 10 hours per year up to a maximum of 100 hours per year.

A support coordinator will help you to put your NDIS plan into action, using your choice of providers.

“The NDIS rules and ethics around support coordination are very clear,” said David Rafferty, Head of Operations, Achieve Australia. “Regardless of who we work for, our role is to provide impartial advice which helps participants in the NDIS to choose the best provider to meet their needs – and the most appropriate services to support the goals outlined in their plan.”

Support Coordinators also help participants to manage financial resources effectively in order to obtain the best outcomes from their plan.

As part of their role, they also consult and communicate widely with NDIS staff – as well as participants' families, guardians, communities, support providers, and primary and allied health services providers.

Achieve Support Coordinators come from a variety of backgrounds. Their skills and experience are as diverse as psychology and behaviour support, social networking, front line support, community living management, and Day Programs. All of this knowledge is brought to bear

on fulfilling the support needs of NDIS participants who engage them.

Millie Zhang, Senior Support Coordinator with Achieve Australia, said she gains great satisfaction from witnessing the positive changes occurring in people's lives as support coordination services open up new possibilities.



“Prior to receiving NDIS funding, many people would remain at home without participating in the community and accessing learning, personal development and leisure activities,” said Millie Zhang, Achieve Australia's Senior Support Coordinator.

“Now we are seeing this change as Support Coordinators educate both staff and families on how best to utilise participants' funding – for example for Day Programs and extra-curricular activities which encourage interaction with the community.”

“Also, prior to receiving NDIS funding many individuals had old and broken support equipment. They also had to pay for repairs and new equipment from their own funds. Now we're able to

help them obtain specialised and customised equipment utilising their NDIS funding. This ultimately leads to a better quality of life for the individual because mobility allows greater community participation.”

NOW HIRING

Achieve Coordinator
Northern Rivers, NSW.

Interested in applying?

Contact Millie Zhang: T: 1300 22 44 38

E: mzhang@achieveaustralia.org.au

NEWS **BIG ACH**



ACHIEVEMENT

ACHIEVE ADDS 28 COMMUNITY HOMES IN WIN

Achieve Australia won a large tender for the delivery of Specialist Supported Living (SSL) services for people with disability living in 28 group homes owned by NSW Ageing, Disability & Home Care (ADHC) in North Western Sydney.

In addition, another home in Dural accommodating four men has just transitioned to Achieve's support from another provider. The families of the men selected Achieve after a thorough search and review process.

People living in the 28 ADHC homes will be supported by Achieve as from February 2018. Planning for the transition is already underway to ensure a seamless and safe transfer of people being supported, families and staff.

Achieve will assume responsibility for supporting 130 people with complex medical and behavioural support needs, many of whom previously lived in Large Residential Centres, including the Rydalmere and Marsden Centres. Approximately 300 ADHC staff will also move over to Achieve and remain in place in the homes to ensure continuity of care.

Achieve has a strong track record in devolutions of Large Residential Centres. It has supported the transition of more than 150 people out of multiple Centres to community homes that enable social inclusion. As a result, it already has in place evidence-based processes to support these transitions - including robust change management procedures and open communications with people being supported, families, staff and surrounding communities.



Journeyman

John is a very personable and curious young man who loves all forms of transport – especially trains – and enjoys being out and about in the community. In fact, he loves trains so much, he even has his own laminated map of the CityRail Network.

He was born with intellectual disability. John also has related physical issues which means he alternates between using a wheelchair and walking.

John also has a lack of muscle tone, along with issues with his gait.

He has difficulty walking over long distances so he alternates between using a wheelchair and walking.

After completing his education at a Sydney high school with an integrated support unit for students with disability, John began participating in Day Programs with Achieve Australia.

Now 34, John has been attending Achieve's Araluen Day Services Centre for the last sixteen years. He participates in day tours of Sydney and enjoys going on picnics – in addition to enjoying music, art and sensory sessions at Araluen.

Every Wednesday he heads off on an excursion in and around Sydney, using public transport and accompanied by Achieve Social Educator, Tania O'Donnell.

"John loves going out," said Tania. "He particularly loves trains so most of our excursions involve rail travel in some way.

"When out in public, John is very friendly and outgoing. He does not speak but actively engages



with the people we meet in his own way – waving, saying hello with his own set of sounds, and using body language such as face touching (his language for happiness) and fist-pumping. He makes friends wherever we go!"

Following each excursion, Tania emails photos of their adventures to John's family. They then enjoy reviewing the day with John – seeing where he went and what he most enjoyed.

The Araluen team also writes social stories for John about his excursions. These help him link where they had been with what they have seen and done together.

John's communication skills have developed as a result of being treated as a full and participating member of a family which includes three siblings – a sister and two brothers.

"John's brothers and sister have always been fantastic, but also practical. Their brother did not receive any special protection or favours, and all the kids grew up together as equals," said his father Warren.

"John has an innate intelligence. He reads body language really well, and has developed his own physical and vocal indicators which make it clear what he wants and needs. In particular John has a photographic memory for labels – he is able to remember and indicate anything he needs that has a brand on it."

"He's not shy about telling us what he does and does not like. If he wants to go out, he'll bring me the car keys. If he wants something to eat or drink, he'll lead us to the fridge. When he's in his wheelchair and wants to change direction or walk, he'll take control."

Glenn Townsend, now Team Leader at the Araluen Day Programs hub, supported John before Tania O'Donnell assumed that role. He emphasised that intellectual disability is absolutely no barrier to a person engaging with their community.

"It's really wonderful to see the effect John has on people when he engages with them during his travels," said Glenn. "When people first encounter him they tend to be cautious and hold back. However once they see how friendly and outgoing he is, and how willing he is to communicate in his own way, they really warm to his personality.

"On one of our days out, a young father come over to introduce his baby to us. On another occasion, a woman approached to chat with us. When she was leaving, she was so delighted that she gave John a kiss on the cheek!"

John's father Warren is a retired high school principal with a background in special education.

John explores his community by train



As both a father and an education professional, Warren observed: "If we segregate people with disability from the community, their behaviour tends to regress – they lose their ability to interact on an equal basis with others.

That's why I am so pleased that Achieve Day Programs enable John to engage with his peers with disability, and also provide him with opportunities to participate in the wider community. It is essential for his individual development."

GETTING MORE OUT OF MY LIFE



My Life services expand to four sites
Achieve's My Life Day Programs have expanded to four service hubs – two in Sydney and two in the Northern Rivers region of NSW – with more to come. The hubs are in Ryde and Seven Hills in Sydney, and Casino and Lismore in the Northern Rivers.

The Lismore hub was badly damaged in floods earlier this year but has now been refurbished and refitted. It reopened in July. Participants in the Lismore My Life services had temporarily attended the My Life Casino hub; they are now able to attend Day Programs closer to home.

The Seven Hills hub is the newest addition to the Achieve family. It was opened to serve the growing demand for Day Programs in the North West of Sydney. Each hub offers up to 50 different activities per week, including:

- Learning new skills to build confidence: Literacy and numeracy, travel training, computing, cooking, and independent living;
- Being out and about in the community: Swimming, sailing, camping, photography, music, art and drama; and
- Exploring work options: Transitioning to work, volunteering, and work experience opportunities.

To learn more about My Life services and see them in action, visit the new Achieve web site and view our video about a young man named Sachin. He participates in activities in the Ryde and Seven Hills hubs and goes out into the community with his Social Educator to develop practical literacy, numeracy and community sign recognition skills: <http://achieveaustralia.org.au/my-life/>

Call 1300 22 44 38 today
or email acarpenter@achieveaustralia.org.au