

## Individual Supported Living in Australia

Australia - School of Occupational Therapy and Social Work, Curtin University

### SUMMARY OF PROJECT

From the outset, this research project closely involved all key stakeholders, including people with disabilities, family members, policy makers, and service providers. Their knowledge and experiences developed the guidelines that will provide the opportunity for many people to deepen their understanding of “Independent supported living” (ISL). The project focused on adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities, but the guidelines adopted principles with universal application to the provision of supported living to other vulnerable groups, including other expressions of disability, elderly people, and people with mental illness.

“Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement.”

—Article 19 of the UN CRPD Optional Protocol

### FACTS & FIGURES

- The third stage of the project incorporates a partnership of three Australian universities and more than 10 NGOs. It will evaluate the quality of 150 ISL arrangements across three states and provide training for over 500 project participants.
- Outcomes of the project will be disseminated through NGOs, disability advocacy groups, and government agencies across Australia.

### PROBLEMS TARGETED

Australian policy and practice support people with disabilities to live in their own home in the community, but a substantial proportion live in large, formal, congregate care settings. In 2011–2012, 63 percent of people with disabilities who received government funding lived in private residences, frequently with an ageing parent, thus foreshadowing substantial demand for supported living - the highest growth area of government- funded services.

## SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

The research project uses the term "individual supported living" (ISL) to define a situation in which a person with a disability is provided with the support necessary for him/her to live in their own home of their own choosing. Consistent with Article 19 of the Optional Protocol of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the project is based on the assumptions that all people with the right supports can live in an ISL arrangement, they do not have to live alone or be "fully independent," and they do not have to live with other people with disabilities unless it is their choice. Beginning in 2008, using qualitative methods that involved key stakeholders including people with disabilities, the first two stages of this project have developed a descriptive framework of ISL and then operationalized that framework into a set of guidelines to evaluate the quality of ISL arrangements. The third stage of the project, which began in November 2014, has now been funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant, and will explore how high quality ISL arrangements contribute to social and economic participation and relationships. It will also gather information on formal and informal costs of ISL options and on decision pathways that led to their adoption.

## OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

In Australia and several other countries services have developed in recent years that focus primarily or even entirely on ISL alternatives. The emphasis of ISL is cost-effectiveness in providing alternatives that support rights and choice and reflect fidelity to an explicit set of underpinning principles. The project has particular relevance in Australia, which has begun to implement the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Based on a model of social insurance, the Scheme provides direct funding to people with disabilities and their families based on choice and control, which undoubtedly will accelerate the take-up of ISL options.

## CONTACT

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