Information Sheet - Home Modifications Panel Discussion

**(Lunchtime Conversations #003)**

On 8 June 2023 we held a Home Modifications Panel Discussion, as part of the Opening the Door project’s Lunchtime Conversation series.

[To see the video, PowerPoint, transcript, and other information go to https://riaustralia.‌org/‌‌opening-the-door/useful-resources/](https://riaustralia.org/%E2%80%8C%E2%80%8Copening-the-door/useful-resources/).

## Forum Overview

In this forum, we talked about how to access home modifications here in Australia. We compared this with home modifications in the United Kingdom. We also talked about the need for reforms in the private rental market.

The challenges in accessing home modifications are ever present for people with disability. From obtaining funding, through to making sure that they are properly provided. For people in private rental, this can be even more difficult.

The panel participants, and links to their organisations can be found below.

**Panel participants**

* Nader Zoljalali - Principal, [National Disability Building Services](https://www.ndbs.net.au/) | Board member - [Home Modifications Australia](http://www.moda.org.au/)
* Leo Patterson Ross - Chief Executive Officer, [Tenants' Union of NSW](https://www.tenants.org.au/)
* John Engeler - Chief Executive Officer, [Shelter NSW](https://shelternsw.org.au/) | Chair, [National Shelter](http://shelter.org.au/)
* Paul Smith - Director, [Foundations (United Kingdom)](https://www.foundations.uk.com/)
* Emily Hunter - Business Support Manager, [Foundations](https://www.foundations.uk.com/)
* Mel Harrison - Peer Network Engagement Officer, [Rights & Inclusion Australia](https://riaustralia.org/) | Director, [Sitting Low, Reaching High](https://sittinglowreachinghigh.com/)

**Facilitator**

* Michael Bleasdale - Executive Officer, [Rights & Inclusion Australia](https://riaustralia.org/) | Company Secretary, [Home Modifications Australia](http://www.moda.org.au/)

## Items noted in Forum

#### Home Modifications – Definition

Home modifications are defined as environmental interventions aiming to support activity performance in the home. More specifically, home modifications often are changes made to the home environment to help people with functional [disability](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disability) or impairment to be more independent and safe in their own homes and reduce any risk of injury to themselves or their [caregivers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caregivers).

Examples of home modifications include installing ramps and rails, altering kitchen and bathroom areas (relocating switches and lowering bench heights), installing emergency alarms.

[Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home\_modifications](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_modifications)

#### Resources referred to in Discussion

**General**

You can find the video to this session and other related resources at: <https://riaustralia.org/opening-the-door/useful-resources/>.

**NSW**

* [Ombudsman NSW: Report (July 2022): Modifying public housing properties to meet the needs of tenants with disability. Refer to https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/Find-a-publication/publications/reports-to-parliament/reports-following-investigations/modifying-public-housing](https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/Find-a-publication/publications/reports-to-parliament/reports-following-investigations/modifying-public-housing)
* [For details of local tenants advocates across the state, go to Tenants’ Union of NSW website: https://www.tenants.org.au/](https://www.tenants.org.au/) The site includes this relatively basic page on modifications: [Tenants' Union of NSW: Property modifications for older tenants. Refer to http://www.tenants.org.au/resource/property-modifications-older-tenants](http://www.tenants.org.au/resource/property-modifications-older-tenants).

#### Further Items raised in Discussion

A range of items were raised by attendees that need more detailed responses – these include:

* For complex home modifications: Clarity on what funding is available for engagement of a project manager to oversee construction.
* Responsibilities for funding of home modifications, in relation to Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)

**Comments by Attendees - from Forum Chat**

* NDIS should also provide an accessible standard for SIL housing.
* One attendee’s consultancy has over 20 CHM projects on the go – none of the NDIS participants had funding in the plan for a project manager. The consultancy takes on the work in good faith hoping NDIS come good, which they have in the majority of instances to date.
* One attendee noted that they have progressed Complex Home Modifications (CHM) and SDA applications for NDIS Participants with complex neurodiverse conditions - where the design elements are traditionally for people with physical disabilities. The NDIA has struggled with the idea that funding Fully Accessible design criteria can be reasonable and necessary for this cohort of Participants. Finding Occupational Therapists (OTs) with the sophistication in their practice to support these proposals has also been a challenge.

## What is the Opening the Door project about?

The [Opening the Door project](https://riaustralia.org/opening-the-door-project/) aims to support people with disability to achieve choice and control with their housing options. The project is for all people with disability regardless of their type of disability or age, and whether they are a participant in the NDIS or not.

**Want to know more?**

To find out more about the Opening the Door project , contact Rights & Inclusion Australia at **projectofficer@riaustalia.org.au**.

**Project Partners**

The Opening the Door project is being delivered by [Rights & Inclusion Australia](https://riaustralia.org/) (R&IA) in partnership with [National Shelter](https://shelter.org.au/), the state & territory members of National Shelter, and [Enliven Community](https://enlivencommunity.com.au/).

**Funding**

The Opening the Door project is funded through the Australian Government’s ‘Individual Capacity Building’ grant program, overseen by the Department of Social Services.

This is part of the broader ‘Information, Linkages and Capacity-building’ response by the Australian Government to address the needs of people with disability in Australia.

**Accessibility**

If you have any concerns with accessibility with this document, or any other queries,

please contact Rights & Inclusion Australia. Email: projectofficer@riaustralia.org

