



# Starting your Independent Living Journey

A resource for people with disability, families and the people who support them

**Housing Hub**  
Find the home that's right for you



# Using this guide

This guide has been created by Mable and the Housing Hub. You can use it as you start thinking about the sort of life you want to live – and the sort of home that will make it possible.

This guide has been written to go along with a video called '[Starting your journey](#)'.

You may want to watch the video with your family, a friend or a support worker you trust. Then if you want, you can ask them for their thoughts as you work through the question and answer sections of this guide.



## Introduction

**When you have a disability, it can be really hard to find the right home – a home that meets your needs and best supports you to live the life you want to lead.**

Housing options for people with disability have traditionally been very limited. Unfortunately, many homes in Australia just aren't accessible to many people. And whether renting or buying, homes in many parts of Australia aren't affordable for many people either.

So people often put up with living in a home that is really isn't right for them. Sometimes it is because they might be hesitant about change, sometimes because they don't know what housing options are available, sometimes because they haven't realised just how unsuitable or unsustainable their current living situation is.

Family, friends and support workers can all help you to think about what you want and need in a home.

A support worker you trust might be able to see things about your current home and supports that aren't right for you – maybe even some things you haven't thought about. They might be able to share the experience they have had with other clients – or even their own personal experience – to help you understand what alternatives are possible.



## Your life, your choice

**There aren't too many decisions we make that are more important than where and how we live.**

So when you are thinking about your home and what might be right for you, it's really important that you are supported to make the choices that are right for you – which may not necessarily be what other people would choose for themselves in the same situation.

The information and advice you get from people around you can help a lot – sometimes it can be life changing. But where you live and how you are supported should always be up to you.





## Where to start?

A good way to start thinking about what you want in your next home is to think about what you like and what you don't like about your current home.

Here are some questions to think about:

Is the place you live in safe for you?			
	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Can you get around and do things in your home without having to worry too much about falling?			
In your home, do you have to worry about hurting yourself or others?			
In your home, do you have to worry about other people making things hard for you or hurting you?			
Is the place you live in safe for you?			



## Is the place you live in accessible for you?

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Can you access all the rooms in your home that you need to?			
Can you enter or leave your home without someone helping you?			
Is it easy for you to go to the toilet?			
Is it easy for you to wash your hands?			
Is it easy for you to reach things you use all the time?			
Is it easy for you to turn on a light or close a blind?			
Is it easy for you to change the temperature?			
is it easy for you to use things in the kitchen?			
Are there things you could do for yourself if something in your home was set up differently?			
Is the place you live in accessible for you?			

## Can you get the support you want in your current home?

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Do you get to choose who supports you?			
If you don't get along with someone who is supporting you, or you don't like the way they support you, could you arrange for someone else to support you?			
If you need support from other people to get out of bed and get ready for the day, can you get up whenever you want to? Or do you need to get up when it suits your support team, or wait for someone else to be supported first?			
If you need support to plan your day, do you get this support when you need it?			
During the day, do you get the support you need when you want it?			
If you need support to make meals, do you get a choice about what you eat? Or when you eat?			
As you and your family get older, is it getting harder for them to support you?			
In 5 years' time, will your family be able to give you support? E.G. if your parents give you a lot of support but they are getting old, you might want to think about other ways you can be supported to make their lives easier.			
Can you get the support you want in your current home?			

## Does your home allow you to live how you want?

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Does your current home make it hard for you to work, or get a job?			
Does your current home make it hard to go to school, or study, or practice your hobbies?			
Does your current home make it hard to do things you like doing during the day?			
Does your current home make it hard to catch up with friends?			
Is it hard to get transport from your home to the places you want to go to?			
Can you decorate your home the way you want to?			
Can you listen to the music you want to, or watch what you want on TV?			
Does the home you live in allow you to live your life?			



# Your life, your choice

**If you have been living in your family home with the support of your family, or living in a place where you get a lot of support – such as a hospital, a group home, or an aged care facility – it can be hard to imagine what life might be like anywhere else.**

Thinking about a life away from familiar people, things and support can also create anxiety and other strong emotions for some people. For example, thinking about moving away from your parents, even if you know the time is right, can be really hard. So it's important to take as much time as you need.

When it comes to something as important as thinking about moving home, it can be worthwhile taking it a little bit at a time. Breaking down the big questions into smaller ones – like we have done in this guide.

Unless your living situation is putting you or the people around you in danger, don't feel like you need to rush your decisions.

Most people will live in a number of different homes, living situations and locations across their lifetimes. Everyone is different, but most of us first live with parents or guardians and possibly siblings in the family home. Then, in early adulthood, people tend to move out of the family home. Some people first move out on their own or into a share house with friends, then later into a home with a partner, possibly with children of their own. Through each of these stages, a person may live in a number of different homes and locations, depending on things like study and work opportunities and other community connections.

Because accessible housing options have been so limited in the past, many people with disability have been encouraged to think about what sort of home they will need for years and years to come, instead of what will best suit their needs and lifestyle now and in the near future. Moving home takes time and effort, so it's not something anyone wants to be constantly doing, but you shouldn't have to worry about what your life may or may not be like in the distant future either. You may want to live with friends for now, but might want to live on your own – with a partner and maybe kids – at some stage in the future. Planning for now and the medium term is okay.

It can be useful to think about the sorts of things you want to be able to do or achieve by living in a home that is better suited to your needs and lifestyle. Talking about these things with people you know and trust can help too. Then you will be better placed to work out what sort of home – and what sort of support arrangements – will best suit those goals.

# What do you need and want in your next home?

The ‘Where to start?’ section earlier in this guide was about working out what parts of your current housing situation you may need or want to change. This section is for working out what sorts of things you want your next home to have.

With support workers you trust, it can be really useful to have honest conversations about what they think is working and what isn't working for you. They may know about options for you that you weren't aware of, and give you information about what is possible.



## Where do you want to live?

Location is really important, do you want to live:	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Close to your parents, siblings or other family?			
Close to friends?			
Close to where you work or study?			
Close to community programs, clubs or leisure activities you're involved in?			
Near a train station or other accessible transport?			
Near good cafes and restaurants?			
Near a shopping centre?			
Near a cinema?			
Near a park?			
Near the beach?			
In the city?			
In a rural area?			
Is there a particular suburb you want to live in?			



# Who do you want to live with?

**Who you want to share your home with is really important too.**

Living alone usually means you have more control about how your home is set up, what style it is and how it's decorated. Living alone usually also means you don't have to worry as much about how your lifestyle affects other people and how much theirs affects yours – things like the amount of noise you make and what time you get up and go to bed.

Living with other people generally means compromising on many things – what style your home is, what colours it is, how it's furnished, how much noise you make and what time you do things. But for many people, the benefits of sharing a home with others – like sharing expenses and having people to talk to – outweigh the compromises you have to make.

Do you want to live with:			
	YES	NO	NOT SURE
A friend or friends?			
Your partner (and children if you have them)?			
Someone who has the same support needs as you?			
Housemates who provide some of your support?			
Do you want to live on your own?			

## What do you want your home to be like?

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Do you want a bedroom and/or bathroom for guests?			
Do you want an area to work or study in?			
Do you want lots of storage space?			
Do you want a garden, balcony or private outdoor space?			
Do you want a space to grow vegetables, fruit or flowers?			
Do you want to be able to keep a pet?			
Do you want a particular style of home? Sparse and modern? Cosy and homely? Lots of windows and natural light? Lots of wall space for hanging art? Write your preferences below:			

## My Preferences:

## What sorts of accessibility features do you need?

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Do you need a home without steps?			
Do you need handrails you can grab hold onto?			
Do you need a home that allows you to access everything from a wheelchair?			
Do you need wide doorways and features that are easy to see?			
Do you need a hoist in the bedroom and/or bathroom?			
Do you need non-slip surfaces on the floor?			
Do you need walls and fittings that aren't easily broken?			
Do you need a space in your home that helps you and others to stay safe?			
Do you need a home where any noise you make won't bother your neighbours? And their noise won't bother you?			
Do you need smart home technology that allows you to do more things for yourself?			
Do you need 24 hour emergency back-up power for your medical equipment			





## Thinking about support

**The term ‘supports’ is sometimes used to describe all the things that assist a person with disability to live a good life – including the accessible features of a home and physical aids. But in this section of the guide we are only talking about person-to-person supports.**

The person-to-person supports you need may change over time, as your disability needs change or your independence and confidence grows. And a home that is well designed and set up for you will likely reduce the amount of person-to-person supports you need. It can be useful to keep these things in mind as you think about the support you will need in your next home.

Your support workers may have experience working with other people who live in other living situations and/or with other models of support. It can be really helpful for you to hear about these as you decide what is right for you.

Some people with disability have their own support workers, who come into their home and provide planned support for things like personal care and cooking. But they share an emergency support team with other people with disability who live close by, for the times when you need support that you weren’t planning on. This model of support is quite common in Specialist Disability Accommodation apartments, and is sometimes called a ‘concierge model’.

Individualised Living Options (ILOs) are ways in which the NDIS may fund you to be supported that are different from the Supported Independent Living (SIL) model that many of us are familiar with. You can learn more about ILOs on the Housing Hub at [housinghub.org.au/ILO](https://housinghub.org.au/ILO).

## How much support from other people will you need in your next home?

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Do you need someone to support you all of the time?			
Do you need a support person or worker to be available to you around the clock (but not necessarily in the same room with you)?			
Do you only need support at certain times of the day?			
If you were living alone, what sort of support would you need and at what times of the day? Answer Below:			

## My Support Needs:

**What things about the way you are supported do you want to stay the same in your next home? Answer below:**

**What things about the way you are supported do you want to be different in your next home? Answer below:**

### **Support with your housing journey**

**Who can support you to think about what's working and what isn't in your current home?  
Can they help you work out what you need in your next home?**

**Who can help you work out the costs of living in your new home and what you can afford?**

**Who can speak up for you if you're not being listened to?**

**Who can help you plan your next steps?**





## Barriers

**There are many things that can make finding the right home hard. These can include:**

- Not enough accessible housing in an area you want to live in
- Property prices or rent that is more than you can afford
- The right home not being ready for you to move in when you want to
- Not having the right funding in your NDIS Plan
- Not enough support available in an area you want to live in
- Not enough transport that is accessible to you in an area you want to live in
- Not having the right furniture or other household items you might need

These things can make finding a new home hard, and you may have to change your plans a bit to suit. But with the right planning and support, you can often work around these things and find a home that is right for you.

It's normal to feel worried or anxious about moving – especially if you have lived in aged care or group homes for a long time, or if you need a lot of support. This 'internal barrier' can feel so big it might stop you from moving. As well as helping you think about what you want from a home, this guide has been developed to help you think about what it is you need to get there.

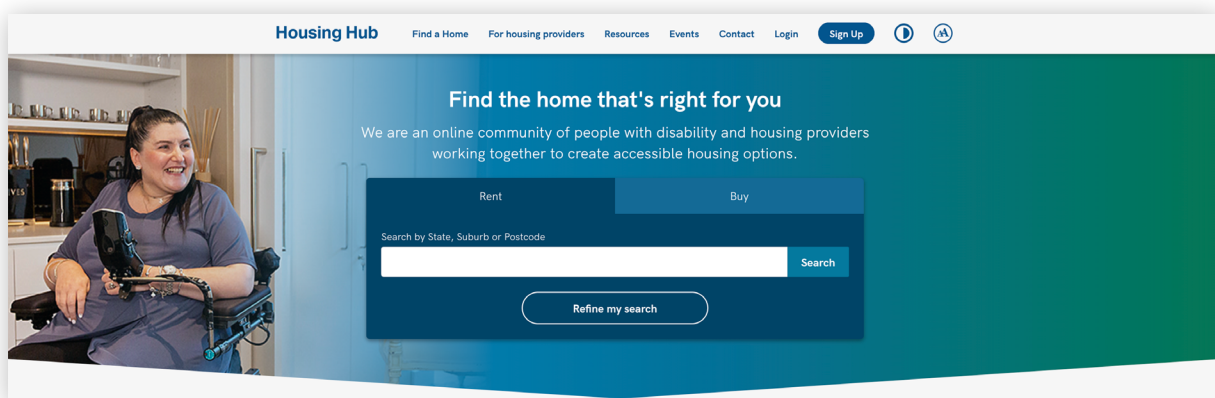
# Starting the search



**Once you know what you want and need in your new home, it's time to start looking!**

Even if you aren't ready to move right away, now might still be a great time to start thinking, planning and seeing what housing options are out there. Too many people put off thinking about their next home until they face a housing emergency – such as a sudden increase in your support needs, a health emergency, or changes to your support network. If you wait until something like this forces you to move quickly, you might be forced to settle for a home or support arrangement that doesn't really suit you.

The Housing Hub website is a great place to start any search for accessible housing.



On the Housing Hub, you can create a 'housing seeker profile', that says where you want to live, who you want to live with, the accessibility features you need and the support you'll need.

The Housing Hub can then show you homes that are a good match for what you are looking for – with a 'Suitability Score' beside each property shown that indicates how close a match it is to your profile. If you want, you can even get the Housing Hub to email you when a home gets listed that is a good match for your profile.

[Learn more about creating a housing seeker profile on the Housing Hub here.](#)

The Housing Hub website also has lots of great [resources for you and the people who support you](#) – about thinking about what you need and want in your next home, and planning your move.



## What next?

This guide is the first in a series of 3 guides that have been created by Mable and the Housing Hub about living more independently. It is for you to use as you start thinking about the sort of life you want to live – and the sort of home that will make it possible.

The next guide in this series is called ‘Planning your move to independent living’.