

The Housing Hub is helping fill the void in disability housing

New website makes it easier for people with disabilities to find suitable accommodation

It's a big thing for any young person to leave the security of their country home and move to the city for work. But when it's a young person with disability there are a whole range of additional challenges.

When 22-year-old Shanais was offered a job in Melbourne it was a huge decision to leave her family home in rural NSW. As well as all the issues anyone moving interstate has to deal with, Shanais also had to find accommodation that met her accessibility and support needs.

Mainstream real estate websites weren't helpful. This gap in the market is being addressed by The Housing Hub (thehousinghub.org.au), a new website that is dedicated to providing a way for people with disabilities to find suitable housing.

The Housing Hub provides a place for housing providers in Victoria, NSW, Queensland, the ACT and South Australia to list accessible properties for sale or rent – including NDIS-funded Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA).

The Housing Hub was set up as a pilot in 2017 by the Summer Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation that works to stop younger people with disabilities from being forced to live in unsuitable housing, such as aged care.

The Housing Hub has continued to expand from the small reach of the pilot – in the past year it listed 800 dwellings and was visited by more than 34,000 people. Further upgrades are in the pipeline, including functionality that lets housing seekers create a profile that explains what they are looking for.

Alecia Rathbone is the Summer Foundation's General Manager of Housing Matching. She says that the National Disability Insurance Scheme "is finally giving people with complex



Shanais (inset) was able to find Specialist Disability Accommodation in Melbourne thanks to the The Housing Hub website, which is dedicated to helping people with disabilities find suitable housing.

disability support needs real choice about where they live".

"Under the NDIS, housing has moved from a government-based allocation system to a market-based system, with the choice now in the hands of people with disabilities," Alecia said.

"People who need accessible housing want a place to go to find housing that meets their needs, but mainstream housing search platforms usually provide very little information on accessibility features."

Alecia said The Housing Hub is the largest online community of people with disabilities and housing providers working together to meet the challenges of the new market conditions. For agents who are handling a property that has accessibility features, The Housing Hub is a valuable marketing tool. Listing on The Housing Hub is currently free, and enables you to showcase the property's accessibility features to an audience of keen tenants or buyers.

The Housing Hub is part of the Summer Foundation's Housing Matching Social Enterprise, working to provide a way for people with disabilities, like Shanais, to find a home that is right for them. Shanais now lives in an SDA apartment in an inner Melbourne suburb.

For more information on listing a property on thehousinghub.org.au contact Mishele Cavanagh-Downs on 0484 555 266 or mishele.cavanaghdowns@summerfoundation.org.au