

Media release
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Seton Villa officially opens first of its purpose-built Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) homes *Vital part of major investment strategy*

Two new purpose-built homes designed for women with intellectual disabilities have today been officially opened in Sydney's Ryde area by [Seton Villa](#). They have a clear focus: providing residents with greater quality of life, independence, choice and control.

The homes are part of a major \$11 million+ investment plan by Seton Villa, which was founded by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul. Seton Villa has been providing housing and supported independent living to people with disabilities in the area since 1966. Over the next three years, Seton Villa will build another five custom-designed homes in line with Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Improved Liveability design standards.

“This year marks 55 years since the first residence was opened – and Seton Villa was a trailblazer when it deinstitutionalised disability care and opened its first shared-homes in 1984. It enabled residents to live in a community setting, while qualified staff provided active support towards their greater independence,” explains Peter Gardiner, Seton Villa CEO. “We have developed this visionary concept in line with, or exceeding, NDIS and SDA Design Standards, and are thrilled to officially open our first two new homes. They are proof of the success of our care model centred on active support.

“Our investment will secure a sustainable and bright future for the residents and community and it will serve our residents, our amazing team of carers, and the families and friends who actively support our broader community. We have a clear aim to expand our offerings over the next decade – including dedicated accommodation for males with intellectual disabilities – and this work is a vital springboard.”

The first of the new homes – Jenny's Place, a four-bedroom home in Marsfield, and Rosalie's Place, a five-bedroom home (which incorporates a semi-independent two-bedroom 'apartment' under the same roofline) in Ryde – feature specially designed bathrooms and kitchens with ergonomic features, and smart technology. The residents were involved in elements of the design including their own furnishings and choosing the paint colour for their rooms.

Designed by Kennedy Associate Architects, a leader in SDA design, the homes ensure they address the housing needs of participants in the NDIS. “The new houses optimise engagement for residents with sunny and private rear gardens, and options for social engagement through multiple living areas and a central study. All bedrooms have generous outlooks of the garden or streetscape for a sense of connection, and the joy of simply watching the world go by. They feature safe and level access throughout to accommodate a range of residents' needs,” says Anthony Nolan, Partner of Kennedy Associates.

The homes' open-plan design also enables the house managers and other staff to provide more active support but also to eventually 'step back' as the residents' capabilities and skill develop. “Our residents are becoming more independent – and this can transition out of the home, to when they're in the community,” says Sylvia D'Souza, Seton Villa House Manager. “The homes are very comfortable and easy to maintain. The equipment and resources are to assist the ladies towards building capacity and maximising skills towards greater independence and choice.”

Glenys Robinson, whose daughters Melissa and Carmel are sharing Rosalie's Place – living together for the first time in 18 years – says it “gives them a sense of pride together”. “Carmel and Melissa are very happy to be together at this stage of their lives. It certainly lifts their spirits,” Glenys says. “It's [also] about the sense of security of knowing the girls have their own place.”

Prior to moving into her two-bedroom apartment within Rosalie's Place, Carmel received training in a range of life-skills to help the move towards more independence, such as cooking, laundry, cleaning, personal grooming and hair care. “She took everything on board, going from strength to strength,” says House Manager Emma Bell. “[Living in the apartment] gives Carmel and Susie, her flatmate, a greater sense of home, independence, confidence and self-esteem.”

Seton Villa's new and redeveloped homes also directly support the City of Ryde Disability Inclusion Action Plan. The properties and services are reflective of the needs of the local community and respond to one of the Ryde LGA key organisational objectives – to create healthy, safe and connected communities.

The Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services Gareth Ward says the developments epitomise the next generation in disability accommodation. “The NDIS has transformed how people with disability are supported. These new homes are designed specifically to meet the needs of residents and allow for people with disability to live independently in the community,” he says.

Seton Villa will complete its next two fit-for-purpose SDA properties – another four-bedroom home and a five-bedroom home – later this year and has plans for more new-builds and redeveloped properties as part of its growth plans.

About Seton Villa

Seton Villa was founded by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, and the first residence was opened in August 1966. The original Seton Villa residence accommodated 20 ladies between the ages of 16 and 30 with the aim of encouraging and nurturing their development and potential. Residents were taught daily living skills, household chores, crafts and were encouraged to get involved in community, social and physical activities.

In May 1984, Seton Villa's residents moved out of the original group residence into a series of shared homes throughout the local Marsfield community. This move was revolutionary for its time, empowering the ladies of Seton Villa to live in community while supporting their greater independence.

Today Seton Villa has seven residential houses to support the organisation's Housing and Supported Independent Living services. Seton Villa is a small, tight community committed to creating a safe and dynamic lifestyle environment for the ladies that is aligned to the guiding care model of active support which means 'working alongside' rather than 'doing for'. Seton Villa respect and nurture the rights of people with disabilities to be active members of the broader community while pursuing their personal interests and goals. Uniquely, Seton Villa's current residences only have female residents and carers, in order to maximise a sense of wellbeing and security.

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