

Media release

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“The smiles say it all”: new purpose-built homes enhancing the lives of women with intellectual disabilities

[Seton Villa](#) has officially opened its two newest purpose-built homes for women with intellectual disabilities – part of its \$11 million investment to develop Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) to support independence, participation and choice.

Seton Villa, founded by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, has long been a trailblazer in providing housing and supported independent living to people with disabilities. The first two homes were opened in early 2021 and the newest architect-designed homes – Lavender Cottage and Leia’s Place – within the Ryde (NSW) local government area, are the third and fourth residences, with three more (SDA) homes to be constructed this year and next.

For Peter Gardiner, Seton Villa CEO, “the smiles say it all”. “The joy of our residents in their new homes really vindicates what we’re aiming to achieve. The homes reinforce our commitment to providing residents with greater quality of life, independence, choice and control. Seton Villa has been providing housing and supported independent living for 56 years. Although cultural and societal norms have changed, the key principles of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac (founders of the Daughters of Charity) underpin Seton Villa. This isn’t just about bricks and mortar, it’s also about helping enhance our residents’ confidence and independence. The homes are also the springboard to further strategic growth to support others in our community.”

The homes were officially opened on Wednesday April 20 by Victor Dominello, the Member for Ryde and Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, and Natasha Maclaren-Jones, Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Services. A special guest was Sr Ellen Flynn, Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, Province of Rosalie Rendu, who is in Australia to connect with the Daughters. “I’m humbled to be part of this momentous occasion,” Sr Ellen says. “As a work of the Daughters of Charity, Seton Villa continues the spirit of our founders: St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac.

“The homes are not institutional. They cater to the genuine needs and real quality care of each resident, assisting them to reach their full potential to live productive and rewarding lives and making their own unique contribution to society. Accordingly, Seton Villa has listening, consultation, shared decision making and subsidiarity central to its servant model. These beautiful purpose-built homes together with the model of care are demonstrative of the Daughters’ spirit and values today, which is shared by the greater community that have contributed to the vision. We are very grateful for the benefactors and donors who have assisted us.”

Designed by Kennedy Associate Architects, a leader in SDA design, the Seton Villa homes are built in line with Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Improved Liveability design standards. These houses have been specifically designed with a 4-bedroom home (Lavender Cottage), and a 5-bedroom home (Leia’s Place) that incorporates a semi-independent 2-bedroom apartment. Each home is beautifully fitted out to suit the specific needs of its residents, including specialist equipment such as electric hoists in the fully accessible bathrooms.

Valerie Adams, mother of Vanessa, one of the Lavender Cottage residents, says: “it’s a house you’d be pleased to call home”. “I’m very impressed by the thought that has gone into it, the way that it’s configured so the ladies can be together or independent.”

It’s a view echoed by Christine Spratt, sister of Vanessa’s housemate and friend, Michelle. “Michelle is settled in a place that is beautiful, fresh and new. She knows this is her home. She would never have done this without Seton Villa. Michelle is learning new skills and her health is improving. She would not have had independence until she had her own house.”

Seton Villa is well on track with its asset redevelopment program. Construction on its fifth house is likely to commence at the end of April, while construction on the sixth house is slated to commence in mid-May. The seventh house is expected to be finished by June 2023.

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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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