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Delivering quality care more efficiently Inquiry
Australian Government Productivity Commission

Delivered via submission portal: <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/quality-care/interim>

Dear Commissioners [REDACTED]

Response to Productivity Commission interim reports on the five pillars of productivity – Pillar 4: Delivering quality care more efficiently

People With Disability Australia (PWDA) welcomes the opportunity to provide insights to strengthen the draft recommendations of the report on delivering quality care more efficiently (the report).

We are a national disability rights and advocacy organisation made up of, and led by, people with disability. A peak, non-profit, non-government organisation, we represent the interests of people with all kinds of disability.

Interim Report Draft recommendation 1.1: The Australian Government should pursue greater alignment in quality and safety regulation of the care economy to improve efficiency and outcomes for care users

PWDA supports the interim report's view that addressing siloed approaches to government decision-making and enhancing connections between disability support, health care, early childhood education and care, aged care, and veterans' care sectors is an important step forward.

We acknowledge that taking different approaches to regulation across sectors can create risks, reduce choice, and lead to increased costs for workers and providers – a more integrated approach can improve access and quality of services and make their delivery more efficient.

However, any regulatory reform affecting disability support services must take into account the sector's key challenges - including limited access to services, especially in regional, rural, and remote areas, as well as ongoing issues with workforce supply and retention - and carefully consider the potential for unintended consequences. New regulatory requirements that impose additional burdens or costs, for example, may inadvertently impact service availability, particularly in areas where access is already limited, by potentially causing some providers to exit the market.

Regulatory reform discussions must centre the lived expertise of people with disability, their supporters, and carers to ensure a clear understanding of how any recommendations would operate in practice.

While disability supports share much with other sectors in terms of independence, dignity, and quality of life, disability care and supports require additional focus on participation, equity, and lifelong inclusion in education, employment, and community life.

The recommendations from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of People with Disability, the Review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and subsequent inquiries - including the NDIS Provider and Worker Registration Taskforce - all of which are informed by and centre the lived expertise of people with disability - present comprehensive findings that must be fully considered in any future reforms.

We are pleased to have been invited to the upcoming roundtable on regulatory reform and look forward to attending to discuss these matters further and provide additional insights and details.

Improving access to, and accessibility of, care and support services to drive productivity

Access to care and support services enable people with disability to live more independent lives and participate more fully in the community and economy.

High-quality care and support services are essential for wellbeing, dignity, and economic participation and directly influence physical and mental health outcomes, workforce engagement, and the alleviation of disadvantage.

Ensuring continued and improved access to these services is vital for Australia's future productivity. Care and support should not be viewed merely as a cost; rather, their availability and accessibility play a crucial role in enhancing living standards and economic wellbeing and driving productivity.

The report should include recommendations that safeguard existing access to these services and identify opportunities for expanding access and improving accessibility.

Employment of people with disability

The recommendations of the report must also address the long-standing gap in workforce utilisation by focusing on the inclusion of people with disability - to address employment conditions that create barriers and/or exclude people with disability from being employed.

Australia's productivity is being constrained by this underutilisation of a significant portion of the workforce. While 21.4% of the population lives with disability, only 5.1% of public service employees identify as such. The employment rate for people with disability (56.1%) remains well below that of non-disabled Australians (82.3%).

Increased workforce participation would increase individual productivity, reduce long-term welfare dependency, increase tax contributions, and enhance Australia's skilled labour base.

Despite the clear economic benefits of employing people with disability, equitable employment outcomes and economic security from employment remain out of reach for many.

The report's recommendations should incorporate measures to gain an accurate understanding of barriers to employment. This approach must also address barriers to accessible and inclusive education - particularly in post-secondary settings - to ensure equitable opportunities for people with disability.

PWDA urges the Productivity Commission to incorporate the voices and lived expertise of people with disability in its report recommendations, and we look forward to participating in the upcoming roundtable to offer further insights and information.

Yours sincerely,

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Megan Spindler-Smith
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People with Disability Australia