Disability Care and Support Inquiry

Firstly, congratulations on the implementation of this inquiry. Having read the issues paper, I take heart that the concerns are already well known and answers are wanted. If only there were a magic genie.
There are many complicating factors, particularly that disability isn't the only area of need – there are also those with a mental illness, the homeless, illicit drug users etc.

When one becomes a parent one never envisages that it will remain a lifelong task. With a child with disabilities it certainly does. Even with the provision of Day Options for our son, who has a congenital intellectual disability, I cannot go out to work. It is too hard to find carers a.m. and p.m. and of course too hard to find an understanding employer when your child is sick and you have no backup care. You get to receive a Carer Allowance or Payment, a disability Pension for your child and once a year, a bonus.
There are problems, which I now have because my son is older, that I had no idea existed before.

- Lack of future planning for supported accommodation
- Too many agencies handling care therefore too many administrators
- A huge reliance on the parents as the never-ending carers with the attendant costs, both mental and physical.
- Affordable housing has been set up locally but without allocating any for the disability area.

This inquiry wants suggestions and hopefully answers. Here are mine.

1. With regard to the annual bonus of either $600 or $1000 to Carers, I consider this amount is not life changing for anyone. It is merely a “sweetener' which overall changes nothing. This should be kept as a block amount, added to every year, in a special fund to generate income for a particular area of disability e.g. staffing of supported accommodation or attendant care required for those with a disability.

2. The GST should be identified as a possible source of funds. Reallocation of priorities for taxes is required for a humanitarian government. GST needs to have a percentage allocated to the disability sector at the national level, but without changing the GST rate of 10%. Where the Federal Government seems readily able to find money for e.g. sporting infrastructure for the Soccer World Cup application, it finds it hard to commit money to a particular need of the disability area, namely something along the lines of a National Insurance Scheme. At election time at a state level, suddenly there was

money [$450m] promised to fund freeway extension so that it could flow two ways. I don't quibble with the idea, just that suddenly the money appears.

3. There needs to be consideration given to Carers when they approach retirement age. They have spent so much of their lives caring and forgoing income to look after their child, yet they have to wait until 65 to access the pension. [particularly women who used to be able to access it at 60]
4. Simplify funding bodies. Recently I had trouble accessing carers for using respite care and had to deal with more than one agency. In order to access a carer from the second agency my contract with the first had to be cancelled! Then it had to be reinstated to allow the initial carer access to funds. There are too many hurdles. I understood that Disability SA, formerly Options, was supposed to bring everything together to simplify the different "buckets of funding". Things still seem complicated. If there were fewer organisations handling the money wouldn't there be less paid out in administrative fees?
5. Where do the carers come from? I don't know the answer to this except that there are more carers completing their Certificate 3 or Diploma, but as pointed out in your "issues paper" there is a lot of competition from the also ever increasing aged care sector.

6. There needs to be adequate future planning so that parents/carers know where their children with a disability can live when they are unable to do so. It should be similarly planned to the aged care sector where one can apply to a facility/group home and have your child live there with the appropriate care. [At the moment it seems that the only solution is for our son to live with us all our lives including when we need to have more care provided for ourselves.] This should be part of the National Insurance scheme. Again there are many agencies and it seems very ad hoc as to whether you get consideration.

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