

Personal Submission to The Productivity Commission

I am the mother of a twelve year old son who has Asperger Syndrome (a form of Autism) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. My son has a 'normal' IQ yet has the social/emotional skills approximate to that of a three year old child.

Because of extreme difficulties with schooling due to the nature of his disability in which he cannot regulate his emotional and behavioural reactions, I have been forced to home school him for the past two years.

There is a desperate need for appropriate services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in the education and health sector. I applaud the government on the introduction of the "Helping Children with Autism" initiative which provides funding for early intervention. However, children still have Autism beyond the age of seven years!

Furthermore how can we access medicare funded items for treatment under the "Helping Children with Autism" package when there are no suitable allied health professionals available because we live outside of a capital city?

I would hope that a NDIS would provide my son with access to suitable ongoing therapy and an education that is appropriate and is not based on IQ but rather functional ability.

I would like to suggest that upon diagnosis of disability, an individual is referred to a 'one stop shop' service which provides a case manager to co-ordinate health, education, disability services and Centrelink. This central management facility would end the frustration parents experience filling out numerous forms and providing multiple copies of specialists reports to various agencies. This central facility would also be responsible for helping parents to self-manage funds allocated for respite and therapy.

We need a system that is more responsive to the individual needs of people with disabilities. Many children with Autism may not have an intellectual or physical disability, but they are often severely disabled socially and parents should not have to fight for this to be recognised.

Suzanne Durrant

