




Inquiry into Disability Care and Support Australian Government Productivity Commission

Submission by:

Disability Knowledge Network 

Background



 consists of nine community service providers from across Victoria. The range of services provided to people with a disability include day programs, supported employment, respite, brokerage, education and training, individual support packages, aged and children's services, supported accommodation and transport.


 formed as a project to enable a group of organisations to establish a platform of shared knowledge and resources across the disability sector. A shared, web-based document management system has been central to the success of the group, fostering a solutions focus on continuous quality improvement practice.  has a steering committee operating at the CEO level, as well as a working group of senior managers, referred to as the Disability Quality Committee (DQC).



Collectively, dKnet:

- Provide support services to (1572) people with a disability
- Employ (929) staff
- Deliver services across more than 33 LGA's
- Manage a budget of (\$ 39.7 million)

Executive summary/abstract


As a diverse group of disability service providers located across rural and urban regions of Victoria,  believes it has a fundamental responsibility to actively contribute to the future direction and development of services and supports to people with a disability. All member organisations of  believe that the establishment of a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is vital to the ongoing viability of the sector.

 believes that eligibility and entitlement are important, but separate issues, that concern the implementation of the NDIS. In Victoria, there are current and appropriate mechanisms in place for assessing the eligibility and needs of individuals who require access to ongoing support. The crisis driven response due to years of ineffective planning and inadequate resourcing is the issue.

The members of  are determined to highlight the viability of the not for profit sector, investment in community development and infrastructure, an integrated approach between services, and independent quality monitoring for organisations as critical issues when we consider the introduction of a NDIS. Furthermore,  believes that the system, not the individual organisations or providers of support, is what is in need of review. We refer to the Productivity Commission's Report on the contribution of the not for profit sector to reinforce this belief.

Eligibility & Entitlement

Eligibility

Members of  believe the eligibility criteria as defined in the Victorian Disability Act 2006 are comprehensive and would be appropriate. Eligibility criteria need to align with Australia's obligations under the UN Charter/Convention. Eligibility should be determined from diagnosis (potentially birth) until government mandated retirement age. Eligible persons should be non-compensable, with capacity to include persons who receive inadequate compensation - i.e. public liability cases

Entitlement

- Is about the support to participate in day to day life
- It is about capacity

Entitlement to receive support from the NDIS will be subject to eligibility. The entitlement will be rated on the support needs of the individual to participate in day to day life. In other words, the capacity of the individual must influence the entitlement that the individual receives.


Early Intervention

As services providers we understand the significance and importance of early intervention programs.


Early intervention is critical not only for the person with a disability, but also for the person's family or carer. Focus needs to be placed on:

- Maximizing medical, therapeutic and allied health opportunities within critical timeframes to improve outcomes
- Maximizing opportunities for development along a lifespan, but particularly in early years
- Ensuring equipment needs are identified and addressed effectively
- Ensuring the needs of families, including siblings, are identified and addressed


Quality Frameworks and Independent Monitoring

 Members consider the Victorian Quality Framework for Disability Services is an effective and comprehensive model; encompassing a focus on continuous quality improvements, outcomes for people with a disability and independent monitoring. It is essential that such a framework is imbedded in the design of any systemic change; and compliance required of any organisation or person providing support services to people with a disability.


Person Centred

 Members consider a person centred and family focussed approach both to planning and implementation of supports is essential. The eligible person with a disability must be able to choose the providers of the services to which they have entitlement under the scheme. This does not mean however, that the person must 'directly manage' their funding; although that must be an option for those who wish to manage their own funding and support.


Community Infrastructure and investment

 Members feel strongly that a greater commitment to Community Capacity Building is required by all levels of government. The disability sector is strongly criticised for its lack of inclusion, segregation and disassociation of people with disabilities in general community life. This is not the case and unfair given the continued work and support the sector has done (often without additional funding) in creating partnerships and supporting communities to plan for and include people with disabilities in everyday activities of community life. Government must invest more in community infrastructure and develop an **education strategy for community** in order to fully realise peoples opportunities to integrate and be included. The implementation of a NDIS will not provide any more opportunities for people if community is not supported and invested in and be positioned to accommodate the growing demand for services and support that the scheme will afford.

Equitable access and distribution of resources

 Member organisations deal on a daily basis with the reality of our current crisis driven system, where only the most critical and vocal people or families are able to access the services they require. An NDIS must be structure to ensure equitable access to supports based on the individual needs of the person.

Workforce capacity

 Members are well placed to understand the significant workforce capacity issues that currently exist within the disability service sector, and a NDIS will need to be developed with this issue at the forefront. As service providers to some of our most vulnerable citizens; we consider the following issues will fundamental to the community's capacity to deliver

- Recruitment and employment costs (Superannuation, Workcover, meeting OH&S requirements etc.)
- Professional development and ongoing support/supervision
- Transport

These issues must be addressed by whomever the employer is; be they private company, not-for-profit or direct family member. The right of workers to a proper workplace should be non-negotiable.