



## **Submission to the Productivity Commission's Disability Care and Support Public Inquiry**

**Prepared by Samuel Murray representing the:**

**Australasian Society for the Study of Intellectual Disability  
(ASSID Victoria Branch)**

This submission is based on the recent Churchill Fellowship recommendations pertaining to the introduction of compulsory registration and accreditation of disability support workers within Australian disability services. These services include, but not exclusively, long-term supported accommodation, facility and in-home respite, day program services, recreation and supported employment.

Although the context of these recommendations is important to the understanding of function and utility, these are not included within this submission. However, attached is the full Churchill Report that provides this rationale.

Any plans to improve on the national approach to supports for people with a disability, must, at its core, first address the quality of the population currently providing this support today, and those that will be providing these supports tomorrow and beyond. Changes to the levels of the support, or funding models that aim to increase people's engagement with their community and lead meaningful and fulfilling lives will only be achieved if the disability support workforce is strengthened.

There is wide variability in the quality of support being provided to people with a disability, particularly those people receiving formal supports within long-term disability accommodation, respite, supported employment and day support settings. For the most part, the disability support workforce is a well meaning, dedicated and caring group of people with a significant load of responsibility to perform within their roles.

In the absence of a clear mandate that establishes a firm set of standards for all disability support staff to adhere to, and maintain, these areas of sub-standard

support will continue ad infinitum, regardless of any other systemic changes that are brought about through this commissions findings.

As previously stated, attached to this submission is a detailed report on observations made during a recent Churchill Fellowship tour throughout England, Scotland, Norway, Canada and the USA. The tour examined the impact on the quality of support being provided to people with a disability in countries where formal, legislated systems are in place to establish core standards of support and professional development.

This recent research trip examined the use of compulsory registration systems, accreditation systems and the ongoing professional development of disability support staff. The rationale for these approaches is self-evident, when you examine the frameworks in place for nurses, or teachers, or even jockeys. One cannot perform in an Australian school or hospital without having met a minimal standard of entry, and more importantly have an ongoing commitment to developing areas of competency across the life of one's career. Surely if this is expected of jockeys, then it should most definitely be reflected in the disability support workforce where people are charged with the responsibility of supporting some of our most disenfranchised citizens to achieves all that they want to be.

The outcomes of the Churchill research trip include the following recommendations, as detailed within the report:

- ❖ That further investigation be undertaken locally to ***assess unmet skill needs*** amongst the DSW workforce.
- ❖ That government invests in a feasibility ***study of the impact of formal professionalisation*** of the DSW workforce.
- ❖ That ***current legislation is reviewed*** to bind these needs within law, not just organisational policy.
- ❖ That a ***professional association be established*** for DSWs.
- ❖ That the current ***Code of Ethics be further developed*** for both employees and employers.
- ❖ That a robust ***review of curriculum for certificates courses*** be undertaken, so that knowledge and skill development is directly matched to job function, and assessed by observation not verbal / written examination.
- ❖ That ***'complex service' teams be further developed***, with the same intensity they face when providing supports.
- ❖ That the funding allocation to service providers ***training budgets be reviewed***

I offer this submission to the Productivity Commission not just as a representative of ASSID (Vic), but also as a concerned member of the community, a dedicated member of the disability sector and as a disability support worker over the last ten years. As a disability support worker, I am a times embarrassed by the lack of expectation

placed upon myself and my peers, coupled with the low standard being set for employment within this sector.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam Murray', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Samuel Murray**  
**President & DSW Conference Chair**

ASSID (Vic)  
c/- RMIT University  
Division of Disability Studies  
PO Box 71  
Bundoora VIC 3083

Ph 03 9925 7899  
Mob 0418 321 783  
[sam.murray@yooralla.au](mailto:sam.murray@yooralla.au)