

Disabilities

Brain Injury Association — Funding Research 2001

Disability Council of NSW — Board Member 2007-2011

The key questions

Sections 3 to 13 set out many issues and questions in detail. However, the key questions are:

- who should be the key focus of a new scheme and how they may be practically and reliably identified

This submission will concentrate on students with a disability in educational institutions

- which groups are most in need of additional support and help

I want to focus on students in tertiary education with disabilities

- **the kinds of services that particularly need to be increased or created**

There has to be a qualitative improvement at educational institutions with much more awareness of the commercial benefit of enrolling students with disabilities and the University disability action plan.

- **ways of achieving early intervention**

Students should be identified at the time of their enrolment. They should sign a contract with the educational institution that all attempts will be put in place to best tailor their educational experience to suit their special needs. Students should be identified at the time of their enrolment.

Each faculty Academic Liaison Officer (ALO) should meet with the student at the beginning, middle and end of semester. The University's disability Action Plan should be available at each faculty office.

The students' lecturers should be identified at the beginning of semester and emailed a copy of the university's Disability Action Plan. Complaints procedures should be outlined to the student who should also meet the University Disability Officer during semester at the Student Association.

Each University should offer tailored career advice and information for potential graduates with a disability eg; mentoring programmes, Specialised graduate with a disability recruitment and employment specialists.

- **how a new scheme could encourage the full participation by people with disability and their carers in the community and work**

When a University has specific career days, pamphlets or recruiters within organizations should also offer information about specific disability recruitment or work experience or mentoring programmes.

There should be a committee made up like a business council of executives or people, perhaps newly retired with extensive knowledge to operate as an advisory panel to government about the promotion of disability employment. The government should offer tax incentives for companies that actively promote the employment of people with disabilities.

- **how to give people with disabilities or their carers more power to make their own decisions (and how they could appeal against decisions by others that they think are wrong)**

Offer a clear guide to complaints dispute procedures, ie Disability councillors, SUPRA, Advocates from within the University eg. Disability Officer, Students Association, Academic Liaison Officers, Equity Officers. The University's Disability Action Plan should be available in Hard Copy at every faculty office.

The student's lecturer should meet with the student at the beginning of semester and discuss goals and outcomes and how best to achieve them.

Instead of scribes, the lecturer should also offer to photocopy their lecture notes and make them available to the student, eg: As a post graduate law student, in some classes in a very competitive environment, students didn't necessarily want to share their notes so I didn't always have access to this resource.

- how to improve service delivery — including coordination, costs, timeliness and innovation

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The potential lecturer, should receive an emailed version of the University's disability action plan from the councillor and a plan to achieve the best outcome for the student should be worked out. Eg, exams, course requirements and alternate assessments

Each University should offer a Laptop Library for students with a disability for use either with a printer service for each lecture so the student doesn't have to carry the laptop around, or for semester long loan

- **the factors that affect how much support people get and who decides this**

The strategy should be worked out with the disability councillor and the course coordinator after a simple form is filled out by a doctor (like the housing form) this should also be available online on the University website

- how to ensure that any good aspects of current approaches are preserved All new aspects should be complimentary to existing procedures, this is one area which has only recently improved. When I started university with an ABI in 1997, UTS wasn't sure what that meant and my GP still thought I had an intellectual disability
- what to do in rural and remote areas where it is harder to get services Improve distance learning, mentoring programs and online careers and information to these communities and hold information fairs within these areas
- reducing unfairness, so that people with similar levels of need get similar support

Get a doctor to write a standardized assessment form available online

- getting rid of wasteful paper burdens, overlapping assessments (the 'run around') and reducing duplication in the system

Use an online system of standardised forms that can be shared amongst organizations from a central website.

Improve complaints procedures

Make some complaints anonymous as many disability workers within universities belong to the "Cream bun and filter drinking brigade" within entrenched fiefdoms

- **how to finance a new scheme so that there is enough money to deliver the services that are needed and provide greater certainty about adequate care in the future**

In the circular flow of income, graduates with disabilities, if properly employed will become future goods and services consumers. They also contribute to the commercial viability of educational institutions by fees. It is time to stop seeing them in the obsolete charity model. I also agree that a lifetime care and support scheme is paternalistic. Innovation Fund or something like that is much less offensive, this is something that cash strapped Australians will support rather than an alien concept which will be seen as another unpopular tax.

- **the practical aspects of a scheme that will make it work, such as how existing arrangements would fit into a new scheme, how to manage risks and costs, and ideas for attracting people to work in disability services**

The current Medicare type levy is a good idea. To sell the idea you should make the economic argument about how the current system is broken and lacks innovation

- **how long would be needed to start a new scheme, and what should happen in the interim.**

Definitely an ad campaign featuring successful Australians with disabilities and a high profile Ambassador who doesn't have to have a disability.

Probably 5-10 years. In the interim, you could try some pilot projects based on international models and run some focus groups including regional and remote areas

These questions are only a guide to help you give us your ideas about some of the most important issues. The more specific your ideas are, the better. For example, telling us that more money should be provided does not tell us where that is needed, how much, the chief priorities for reform, where the money will come from, how it would be given out, and a host of other important questions that need to be taken into account in building a new system.

Legislation

D.D.A. guide: Getting an education

A person with a disability has a right to study at any educational institution in the same way as any other student. The DDA makes it against the law for an educational authority to discriminate against someone because that person has a disability. This includes all public and private educational institutions, primary and secondary schools, and tertiary institutions such as TAFE, private colleges and universities. What should educators do? Educators must offer a person with a disability the same educational opportunities as everyone else. This means that if a person with a disability meets the necessary entry requirements of a school or college he or she should have just as much chance to study there as anyone else. Educators must base their decisions on a person's ability to meet the essential requirements of the course. They should not make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do because of a disability.

Article 24

Education

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:

- (a) The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
- (b) The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
- (c) Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.

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2. In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:

- (a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
- (b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- (c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
- (d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
- (e) Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:

- (a) Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;
- (b) Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;
- (c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.

4. In order to help ensure the realization of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative

and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.

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5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities

EXPERIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY — 1996–1999

Committees at UTS

- Disability Officer Student Representative Committee
- NUS Representative - Cross campus Initiative -University of Western Sydney
- Student Equity Committee
- Student Representative Council
- Post Graduate Representative - UTS Academic Board

Education

- MASTER OF INTERNATIONAL LAW: University of Sydney
- MASTER OF JOURNALISM: University of Technology, Sydney: 1999
- BACHELOR OF ARTS Political Science - University of New South Wales