

Productivity Commission Submission- DISABILITY CARE AND SUPPORT.

I make this submission as a person who has had a long involvement with people who have various forms of disability in the community. I also have personal experience and first hand knowledge of disability within my own and extended family. I am aware of many issues that disabled people face in their everyday life, particularly barriers that prevent many people from having the quality of life they should enjoy.

- The NDIS should be available to ALL people who have a disability.
A disability does not disappear at the age of 65yrs and the aged care sector is not functioning well enough to cater for the needs of the disabled. People assessed as having a disability prior to retirement/being classed as aged, should retain that status for life.
- Educate to change societal attitudes to disabled persons. A sound knowledge of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by all Australians would assist in the implementation of a national disability scheme. This should be based on a similar system as Medicare, the higher the income the greater the contribution.
- Eligibility for assistance should not be based on income or assets. Income support should be separate from aids/service finance.
- Support finance should be based on need and must allow for individual choice.
People given individual funding must not be left entirely to their own resources, but still be given support e.g. information, options etc so that they do not become the “forgotten people”. Keeping in contact is also a way of ensuring accountability and ensure new knowledge/information services are provided.
- People assessed as having a permanent or progressive impairment should not have to prove repeatedly that they have a disability.
- Disabled persons should be empowered to have a greater input into any schemes and services and should be the main consultants/operators.
- People with disabilities who have employment value their work and make a determined effort to succeed both for themselves and their employer. More disabled persons should be given greater opportunities to work in leadership roles by removing existing barriers such as poor infrastructure, lack of appropriate transport and cost of development training.
- INFORMATION dissemination is vital. Not every disabled person has an organisation to represent them. Organisations generally do not have sufficient funds to allow them to notify clients of forums, inquiries etc unless it is specific to them only. How many people could have input to this scheme but are unaware of it? How did the Productivity Commission notify the public and ask for their participation?
- Information should be disseminated automatically to everyone in receipt of any form of disability support. This must include those disabled persons who have transferred from the DSP to the aged pension – a person does not suddenly lose their disability on their 65th birthday.
- Disabled persons, their families and carers must be given more information which will enable them to make informed decisions, provide more choices and create greater personal autonomy. There are a lot of people capable of coping much better if they are given easily understood, timely and accurate information.
- The introduction of local and/or regional disability forums would greatly assist disabled persons to share information and ideas to assist disabled persons, their carers and families and help governments, service providers and other allied industries to support disabled persons in a more meaningful way. It would be helpful to connect with other forums in other areas/states where shared communication could enhance the well-being of many families and also provide valuable information to those seeking to assist in making Australia more inclusive country.
- TRANSPORT is a major barrier for the participation of disabled persons in most aspects of their life. Many disabled persons have never experienced travel on public transport and are fearful of doing so, this could be overcome by transport providers making an opportunity available for potential users to try out travel in a safe, non-threatening environment with the assistance of

trained personnel. The constant extension of the time-frame for the introduction of more accessible buses in S.A and the lack of connections to other routes is a barrier for many people to access study, employment, training and social activities.

- Restrictions on the amount of travel subsidies is also a barrier to social inclusion. When limitations apply or the additional cost of travel is beyond the ability of the person to pay this is yet another barrier to full participation of many disabled persons.
- When un-met need has been addressed consideration should be given to making low or interest free loans to people who need to have a vehicle modified/or purchase a suitable family vehicle to enable a family with a disabled member to participate fully in society. Many families are on low income/poverty because of expenses not experienced by other families and the whole family is affected by lack of suitable, affordable transport. In many instances a suitable vehicle is not a wish but a necessity.
- For people who have acquired a disability assistance should be given to allow them to maintain their independence and remain connected to their community as closely as possible. For families who are at risk of losing the family home due to a disabling occurrence causing financial hardship consideration should be given for mortgage relief through a low or no interest loan. I have seen the affects of people who have suffered enormous losses as a consequence of disablement. These include loss of employment, loss of income, loss of status, loss of lifestyle, loss of social activity (sport) and loss of self-esteem to name a few that impact on family and others. Children of a disabled parent suffer as a consequence too, the loss of the family home and the security it offers has a huge impact on a child, along with all the other losses experienced by the family.
- Universal housing is essential for the future. It provides choices and removes many barriers that presently exist. State governments should lead the way and ensure that all new housing is accessible. When unable to find a suitable house to meet our needs we found it necessary to build. We were informed that it does not cost any more to provide wider passages and doorways as there are less materials used in these areas, eg bricks.
- Local councils should not be giving approvals for building plans that do not allow access for disabled persons. Disabled people should be able to visit family and friends and not be excluded on the basis of inaccessibility. Lifetime (or generational) basic housing should be the norm with minimal adaption need for those with a severe disability, this would be a huge financial saving as major works are very costly and families are restricted from relocating because of the lack of appropriate housing options. An opportunity for employment advancement could be lost due to the inability to relocate.

I am aware that there is much, much more that can and should be said but I have given a bird's eye view of some of the aspects of the disability sector that is frequently overlooked or ignored by those making decisions.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate.

Rhonda Maddigan