



Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders

10 August 2010

Inquiry into Disability Care and Support
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428, Canberra City ACT 2601
Email: disability-support@pc.gov.au

Dear Commissioners

We write to express concern that Carers Australia told the Productivity Commission hearing into Disability Care and Support that:

"We've undertaken a number of consultations just recently and spoken with a number of carers and there are a few themes that are coming across. One is there's confusion around "profound/severe". The people we have spoken to whose child might have autism or they may have two children with autism, for example, they think that this system will be for them. These children may not be in the profound or severe classification but there is an expectation that they will be assisted through a scheme such as this" (page 394 of the Hearing Transcripts - see http://pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/99946/20100713-canberra.pdf).

We believe Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are *severe or profound* for most people who are diagnosed with these disorders. People with severe or profound disability due to their ASD should be eligible for benefits from any new national disability care and support scheme.

We offer the following evidence that most people with ASD experience severe or profound disability, hence they should be eligible for disability care and support.

- The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 4th edition* (1994) defines Pervasive Developmental Disorders, the category of disorders that includes ASD, as "characterized by severe and pervasive impairment ...". As such, the requirements for a diagnosis of an ASD is that the person has, at least, a severe.
- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reported (see <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/aus/bulletin42/bulletin42.pdf>) that the Australian Bureau of Statistics collected data in Australia showing that "Autism and intellectual impairment were associated with high proportions of severe or profound core activity limitation - 87% and 75% of children with these respective conditions also had a severe or profound core activity limitation".

Australian peak bodies relating to disability do not include representatives of the ASD community. The Commonwealth recognises and funds (contributes to) a number of disability peak bodies (see <http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/progserv/providers/AustralianDisabilityEnterprises/Pages/DisabilityPeakBodies.aspx>) but does not fund a peak body for ASD. It is important that the Productivity Commission relies on the ASD community for specific and accurate information about autism spectrum disorders. Further, it is important to note that opinions and information relating to disability generally may not relate to people with ASD, their families and associates.

Yours sincerely

Jon Martin
Chair