

## **SUBMISSION FROM THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION INQUIRY ON DISABILITY CARE AND SUPPORT**

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The Western Australian disability services system has been recognised both nationally and internationally for its innovative and contemporary approaches to providing person centred and self-directed supports. Local Area Coordination, a model of support that has been in place for over two decades, has provided a strong foundation for individual planning, tailor-made community supports and participation of people with disability and their families and carers in their local communities. This model has complemented the strong community support sector in this State. It is acknowledged, however, that unmet demand for disability care and support continues to grow despite the provision of significant growth funding for disability services over the past decade from the State Government. The following issues, based on learnings from the Western Australian disability system, are provided to help inform the Productivity Commission's consideration of any future system and approach to funding for long term disability care and support.

### **Consideration of a Broad Coverage that Includes People with a Permanent Severe or Profound Disability, Regardless of Diagnosis and Includes People with Mental Disability**

Any scheme proposed by the Productivity Commission should:

- focus on functional need rather than diagnosis or causation by establishing a simple and transparent needs based test for eligibility;
- reduce the likelihood that people with multiple and complex needs do not 'fall between the gaps';
- give consideration to how the disability support needs of people who may acquire a non-age related disability after the age of 65 years, and who are not covered through existing compensation schemes, are provided for in a fair and equitable way; and
- ensure that receipt of funding supports to meet an individual's disability support needs continues to be available for eligible children and adults who may at different points in time enter the child protection or justice systems.

### **Ensuring Linkages with and builds on Current State based Service Systems and Compensation Schemes as well as Preserving and Supporting Current Levels of Informal Care**

Any scheme proposed by the Productivity Commission should:

- preserve and enhance current levels of informal care, through appropriate support to families and carers, as well as promote growth in the community service sector to provide flexible, citizen-centric supports;
- invest in and build service infrastructure by supporting the development of workforce skills and the competence of management boards; and
- complement existing State based long term care and compensation schemes.

### **Ensuring State Control of Funding and Administration of any Proposed Scheme.**

Any scheme proposed by the Productivity Commission should:

- promote local control and decision-making to ensure services are person-centred and focussed on supporting the individual in their local community;
- build on the existing State administrative structures for funding, purchasing, monitoring and regulation of providers;
- complement and leverage off other State based services such as housing and community services; and
- allow States and Territories to retain control of the administration, assessment, service delivery, funding (including funding allocation to individuals) and disability policy and program direction.

Western Australia would oppose any national disability scheme that provides the Commonwealth with funding and policy control over the disability sector in the State. In addition, Western Australia would be unsupportive of a national disability scheme should it be financed in such a way that it encroaches on or erodes the State's existing revenue base in any form.

### **Promote Effective Early Intervention and Strengthen the Sustainability of Family and Carer Capacity**

Any scheme proposed by the Productivity Commission should:

- support choice, decision making and flexibility for people with disability and their families and carers, rather than adopt a 'one size fits all' approach;
- provide access to appropriate and timely supports to prevent problems from escalating, limit the impact of disability, and improve the transition of people with disability through life stages;
- include the provision of easily accessible and timely information and coordination support for people with disability, their families and carers;
- include appropriate supports and safeguards for people with decision making difficulties who may be particularly vulnerable;
- consider the sometime unique challenges of facilitating appropriate supports and services in rural and remote areas, which require flexible approaches and may be enhanced through, for example, national systems for 'telehealth' development and implementation across Australia;
- support people with disability, their family and carers by responding appropriately to individual needs through a lifelong, person centred approach that anticipates future needs and major life transition points and responds to changing needs; and
- improve the resilience, skills and opportunities of people with disability and their carers to effectively respond to the impact of disability and participate in social, economic and community activities.

### **Promote Effective Responses by and Inclusion of People with Disability in Mainstream Services and Supports**

Any scheme proposed by the Productivity Commission should:

- improve collaborative approaches to early intervention and prevention across service systems and the inclusion of people with disability in mainstream supports and activities;
- improve access to mainstream primary health care including therapy and professional services so that people with a disability are not relegated to support from a potentially duplicate, and often higher cost, 'specialist' service response and
- improve the interface of health and disability services by supporting a more coordinated approach to long term rehabilitation, slow to recover programs and effective transition from acute health for those with chronic or complex conditions.

### **Build the confidence of people with a disability through lifelong planning and certainty of appropriate service responses at critical life stages**

Any scheme proposed by the Productivity Commission should:

- promote services that are person centred and focus on the strengths of the person rather than deficits/diagnosis and extend beyond responding to the current needs of the person with disability to incorporate responding and planning for their future goals and aspirations;
- improve access to aids and equipment so that aids and equipment are provided at appropriate stages recognising the continuum of change in disabling conditions that may include improvement, fluctuations or deterioration in function; and
- build sector and workforce capacity to deliver appropriate service responses through innovative recruitment strategies and targeted training and skills development establishing the disability sector as an 'industry of choice'.