

To The Productivity Commission  
Disability Care and Support,  
Productivity Commission  
GPO Box 1428  
CANBERRA CITY  
ACT 2601

Wednesday, 18 August 2010

Dear Sir or Madam:

**Re: Disability Support for people living in the Community.**

As a volunteer at the Kew Neighbourhood Learning Centre, and a social worker with many years experience, I am writing to you to express my support for the introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The Kew Neighbourhood Learning Centre (KNLC) has a program dedicated to providing educational, social and recreational programs for marginalised people in the community. All of these people have a disability - either psychiatric or physical. Many of them have lost contact with their families and are dependent of government departments to case manage their lives. However, our programs are not part of the case management process as in the situation of other community members we think it is important for people to be able to chose how to spend their time and which programs they will attend.

Our program provides a range of educational, social and recreational activities. This program is funded through the Department of Health and Community Care.

One aspect of a National Insurance Scheme is that the funding is attached to the person. This gives the individual an increased capacity to make choices about their life style, living arrangements and which agency to attend. Because our program is not part of a case management program people become participants at KNLC because they chose to, not as part of someone else's plan for them.

Here are some of the issues our participant face.

1. People who live in rooming houses or special accommodation houses are subject to being evicted. Recently we have had at least three such residences closed in Kew. The residents have been moved elsewhere - to Mitcham and Croydon in some instances. This has been at the cost of leaving a centre where they have been participants for many years.
2. Transport is a further problem. Although we have limited use of a community bus, this is not always available. Taxis are frequently unreliable especially if a maxi taxi is required.
3. Some of our participants live with aging parents. This becomes an enormous problem especially if one parent becomes ill. There are never enough respite care beds, and when a family breaks down it is hard for an individual to be placed in housing well into middle age. Community centres provide day programs but not respite care.

4. Suitability of Neighbourhood Houses for people in wheel chairs is a resourcing difficulty. At KNLC we have a small staircase but no chair lift, as there is no funding available.

People with disabilities, particularly those on low incomes and without family support are particularly powerless. They have little say in their housing, their activities and their ability to access community resources is therefore limited. Neighbourhood houses and learning centres are places where a range of community members go and these centres could play a vital role in the quality of life for people with disabilities. However, in the current funding arrangements it is hard for such centres to provide all the facilities just as it is difficult for individuals to attend.

This is a brief outline of the relationship between people with disabilities and community houses as well as some of the wider problems these people experience. The introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme as proposed by the National Disability and Carer Alliance would remedy some of the resourcing and income issues for people with disabilities.

Prudence Brown