
Response to Productivity Commission 2010 Inquiry into Disability Care and Support

Submitted by:

field – *furthering inclusive learning and development*

(incorporated as DISTSS).

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field would like to thank the Productivity Commission for allowing us to make a submission in response to the 'Productivity Commission 2010 Inquiry into Disability Care and Support'. Our submission is informed by our experience in providing learning and development to the Victorian disability sector workforce (and increasingly community) for over 10 years.

About ***field***

Our vision: People with a disability to be included in all aspects of society

field aims to promote a culture of learning for people with disability, the disability services workforce and the community to create a more inclusive society.

field achieves these aims by:

- Producing learning resources for the disability workforce and the community
- Providing information about learning and development opportunities
- Conducting forums, face to face and on line, on topical issues
- Researching, developing and delivering targeted training
- Facilitating learning networks and partnerships
- Leading new and alternative models of learning
- Providing consultation and evaluation services about learning and development for inclusive practice

At ***field*** we believe that the most critical area of learning is the relationship between the person with disability and the disability support worker or team. This is the point where policy meets practice and it is at this nexus that principles of the Victorian State Plan and Disability Act 2006 (Victoria) are either realised or not achieved.

At the centre of our work is the use of learning and development to support the process of inclusion of people with a disability in society. One of ***field's*** recent activities that

used learning and development as a vehicle for inclusion was the Rob McNamara Art Exhibition. The exhibits came from both artists with and without disabilities and were displayed without differentiation, symbolising inclusiveness. All artists needed to respond to the theme of “*Beyond First Impressions: What changes if you get to know me?*,”

This exhibition took place in a mainstream gallery in the heart of the arts precinct in Collingwood. The exhibition was visited by in excess of 300 people from the general community and 8 pieces of art were sold. Understanding and true inclusion in ‘community’ was experienced by both artists and the audience.

Response to the Productivity Commission

We welcome the initiative by the Commonwealth Government to review the current system of support to people with a disability and their families. This review will provide an opportunity to reform our current model of funding disability services that currently consists of extensive unmet needs and ad hoc approaches.

Federal legislation relating to disability is founded on creating the goals and rules for the distribution of funds to provide Disability Services (through the CSDA and directly in relation to employment services) and also through anti-discrimination legislation. Both pieces of legislation are, in effect, providing cover for holes in society's systems. However, society has a capability, far greater than governments and we envision service systems that support and nurture this capability. Thus we welcome this Commonwealth initiative to review the disability service system and explore the NDIS concept.

field supports the human rights - citizenship principle underpinning a universal insurance scheme, whereby the costs of disability services are shared across the whole of society – including people with disability. Thus the whole of society become responsive to supporting people with a disability living the lives they choose and becoming creative and contributing citizens of society.

We believe that all people with a disability, regardless of how a person acquires a disability, should be covered under this new scheme. We also believe that the scheme should accommodate individuals’ changing life circumstances.

We would support such a national and on-going system that would significantly increase the capacity to plan and better meet needs of all Australians. We support an approach that would enable **field's** vision for social inclusion and improved outcomes as experienced by people with a disability by:

1. Allowing long-term planning and development of better supports both in the general community and by specialist disability service providers.
2. Allowing people with disabilities to continue to take up or develop socially

- inclusive and productive roles from which they may have been excluded due to the inadequacy of the support available to them.
3. Providing a secure basis for the introduction of a range of service models including self-directed approaches (direct client attached funding).

field supports the current direction of the Victorian Governments implementation of self-directed approaches for people with a disability. We see this as an opportunity for a new system to provide mechanisms to fully allow such approaches to be implemented and extended.

In our work in the learning and development sphere of disability workforces, a central tenet of growing import is the meaningful and genuine inclusion of people with disability in the decisions and developments that will impact directly on their lives. Our opinion and experience is that a process fully inclusive of people with a disability is in itself insurance to 'getting it right'.

This is consistent with a human rights approach and the various Disability Acts and Standards throughout Australia, and encompasses key principles such as decision making and choice. These Standards are central to ensuring that services are human rights based, rather than about social control or wasting lives. We would like to see these principles also applied in the process to develop the NDIS, so urge the Commission to ensure the voice, expertise and experience of Australians with a disability is directly present from the inception and throughout the development of a NDIS.

Given that we are operating in a climate of new and more various disability service supports, the inclusion of people with a disability throughout the process is even more important. The alternative is to risk designing a scheme to reflect the past (existing service system) instead of what should be a watershed for the future.

Therefore, for both practical and ideological reasons, we submit that people with a disability should immediately, directly and comprehensively be included of in the NDIS process.

We again thank you for providing us with the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours Sincerely

Linda Budd
Acting CEO, Prepared on behalf of the **field** Board.
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