

SUBMISSION TO:

Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability Care and Support

Thank you for having this Inquiry and for the opportunity to make a submission. Two and a half years ago I sustained spinal cord damage (unknown cause) between T4 and T6 which has left me an incomplete paraplegic. As my damage was of unknown cause, I didn't fit into any category as would someone whose damage was caused by a physical trauma. It took some time before I was able to access the resources provided by Spinal Injuries Association and Spinal Cord Injuries Australia because I didn't know they existed or that they would be able to help me. Since I've joined both these wonderful organisations I've been better able to deal with my situation. I would like to see more government funds directed to them and to the Sporting Wheelies Gym, which I've also joined because if physically disabled people are involved with these organisations, they are more likely to gain the confidence to live better lives. But that may be a separate issue to the implementation of the NDIS.

The NDIS is essential for Australia because it is an insurance scheme and like other insurances, we pay in to the scheme hoping we will never have to make a claim but know that if a claim is made we will be looked after. Some "able-bodied" people will need convincing that such a scheme is necessary. They may look around and think "I'm not disabled and I don't know anyone who is, so why should I be paying for all them." The point needs to be made – anyone at any time could become disabled or a carer for a disabled person. I can imagine a very effective television marketing campaign could be built around this concept.

I became disabled completely "out of the blue" and my husband is now my carer. We are self-funded retirees and expected a comfortable retirement with some travel and enjoyment in our "autumn" years. Now I'm in a wheelchair and my house has had to be modified to accommodate my disability. Now some of our savings are used to pay for the accoutrements necessary to live as close to a "normal" life as possible. With an NDIS these things and perhaps some medical expenses and therapy would be covered.

I am speaking for myself and also for everyone who might benefit from the NDIS because it is the next step to showing Australia is a truly "civilised" country.

Suzanne Mulligan