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Addendum to ACiA Submission

Response to Productivity Commission Draft Report

National Disability Long-term Care and Support Scheme

29 April 2011

Ensuring a quality, sustainable workforce under a National Disability Insurance Scheme

Further to the Attendant Care Industry Association's (ACiA) submission (DR642) to the Productivity Commission in response to the Commission's draft report into Disability Care and Support, as well as the evidence presented at the Productivity Commission's Public Hearing in Sydney on 13 April 2011, ACiA offers the following information to inform the Commission's final report.

- ACiA is the peak body representing charitable and private Attendant Care (also known as community care) service providers. The approximately 100 providers that we represent employ more than 15,000 workers. Those providers are predominantly based in NSW, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania, with numerous providers delivering attendant (community) based care and support in all Australian states and territories.
- The emerging challenges of locating, recruiting and retaining an appropriately skilled and motivated community care workforce are well documented. In their recently published *Environmental Scan 2011*, the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council found that the 'continuing workforce development challenges include the need to expand cross-disciplinary practice and case coordination and management roles and approaches; establish new and expanded roles and skills to meet complex needs; and establish more effective service and workforce planning and effective management and leadership, especially to facilitate change.'¹
- The ability to effectively implement a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and a National Injury Insurance Scheme (NIIS) will hinge on meeting these challenges.
- ACiA concurs with the Productivity Commission's assertion that 'professional development in the disability services industry involves experience as well as formal training. While formal training plays an important role in developing a skilled workforce, this should not be compulsory for all employees.'²
- The experience of ACiA member organisations (service providers) is that a formal qualification is not necessarily a panacea for ensuring Attendant Care Workers (ACWs) are able to deliver high quality, low risk care and support services.

¹ Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (2011). *Environmental Scan 2011*. Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council. Available online: https://www.cshisc.com.au/docs/research-reports/environmental_scan_2011.pdf

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² Productivity Commission, 2011. *Disability Care and Support – Draft Report*. Productivity Commission. Available: <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/disability-support/draft>

- In a survey of ACiA members, the majority of service providers stated that they generally employed ACWs with a Certificate III. However, this appeared to not be because of the skills or knowledge that workers had obtained, but because it demonstrated some level of commitment to the work to be undertaken. They therefore mostly felt that they still had to train ACWs 'from scratch'.
- This sentiment aligns with the National Institute for Labour Studies' finding that 'even though workers have relevant qualifications and training, they may still find that they lack the skills needed for their jobs.'³

Issues identified by ACiA members with the outcomes of formal training

- Major issues identified by ACiA members surrounding the attainment and value of formal qualifications for ACWs:
 - For each and every service user, **individualised training is still always required**
 - The wide range of subjects that are offered in certification courses means that careful examination of the qualification is required to know if anything relevant had been covered
 - Despite having been deemed 'competent' on a topic, service providers felt that workers generally needed to be trained again and again. Some therefore questioned the rigour and applicability of some formal qualifications.
- In no way should this be interpreted as ACiA not supporting training such as Certificate III. Where these programs are conducted thoroughly and competency assessed with rigour, workers have the opportunity to gain a broad range of knowledge and skills that begins to professionalise the workforce as a whole.

Support a quality, sustainable ACW workforce

- No other health, care or support industry, which deals with vulnerable people in their own homes or community, is currently unregulated. ACiA exists to promote the vision of an Attendant Care industry that is known and respected as a provider of quality services within a sustainable environment. This involves identifying, supporting, promoting and advising on best practice in Attendant Care, and advancing the competencies and skills of service providers and ACWs.
- To achieve the above, ACiA uses current legislation, guidelines and research on best practice to develop key clinical and corporate management policies to support and guide ACiA members and funding bodies. For example, this includes publishing

³ Martin, B. and Healy, J. 2010, *Who Works in Community Services? A profile of Australian workforces in child protection, juvenile justice, disability services and general community services*, National Institute for Labour Studies, Flinders University, Adelaide. Available: <http://www.csmac.gov.au/admin/documents/Who%20works%20in%20Community%20Services%20Report.pdf>

policies to guide all stakeholders on the necessary skills and/or qualifications (where applicable) for an ACW to complete a certain task, with respect to the level of complexity/risk associated with the task.

- In addition, ACiA has developed a Quality Management Systems Standard, the *Attendant Care Industry Management System Standard* (ACIMSS). The ACIMSS certification is primarily focused on achieving demonstrable quality outcomes for Service Users.
- ACiA also asserts that an effective quality system such as the ACIMSS has a role in supporting a quality, sustainable ACW workforce. That is, by encouraging and supporting service providers to develop systems of recruitment, training, supervision and support for all ACWs - **appropriate to the role of the ACW and the complexity of the needs and risk associated with delivering services to the Service User** – ACWs will be suitably equipped to deliver effective and safe care and support services.
- Such a quality system must ensure that service providers are able to demonstrate evidence of the effective development and implementation of their workforce support systems.

Value Placed on Work

- It is clear that the value of the work undertaken by all employees in this sector, but particularly ACWs, continues to be undervalued. This is despite:
 - The increasing complexity of the work being undertaken
 - The special range of skills required to complete the tasks competently and in a such a way that there is respect shown (as the service is being delivered in the person's own home or community) and so the service 'adds value' to the quality of the person's life
 - The unsocial and erratic nature of the work.
- The lack of value is primarily shown in the rates paid by funding bodies for care and support services. This impacts of course on the wages paid to ACWs, but also affects what resources can be put into developing and nurturing what is essentially a remote workforce.
- While ACiA understands that the Commission must be mindful of the affordability of an NDIS and NIIS, ACiA encourages the Commission to urge funders and price regulators to support service providers to pay wages that are sufficient to attract committed workers into the sector and commensurate with the value of the work delivered in the community.