

Inquiry into Disability Care and Support
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

Delivered to: disability-support@pc.gov.au

Monday, 11 April 2011

Joint Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability Care and Support

Dear Committee Secretary,

The National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) is the national peak organization representing the rights and interests of people from non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability, their families and carers throughout Australia. NEDA is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) to provide policy advice to the Australian Government and other agencies on national issues affecting people from NESB with disability, their families and carers.

FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. FECCA provides advocacy, develop policy and promote issues on behalf of our constituency to government and the broader community. FECCA supports multiculturalism, community harmony, social justice and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and racism.

Attached is a joint submission developed between NEDA and FECCA on common issues of concern as they relate to informal and formal workforce and care issues. We hope that the Inquiry will give favourable attention to the recommendations.

Yours sincerely

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Executive Officer, NEDA

Pino Migliorino
Chair, FECCA



Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into long term disability care and support

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Introduction

The National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) is the national peak organisation representing the rights and interests of people from non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability, their families and carers throughout Australia.

NEDA is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services, and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) to provide policy advice to the Australian Government and other agencies on national issues affecting people from NESB with disability, their families and carers.

NEDA actively promotes the equal participation of people from NESB with disability in all aspects of Australian society.

FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

FECCA provides advocacy, develop policy and promote issues on behalf of our constituency to government and the broader community. FECCA supports multiculturalism, community harmony, social justice and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and racism.

FECCA's membership comprises state, territory and regional multicultural and ethnic councils. FECCA has an elected executive committee and a professional national secretariat implementing policies and work programs on behalf of its membership and stakeholders.

While NEDA uses the term non English speaking background to refer to its constituency, FECCA uses the term culturally and linguistically diverse. For the purpose of this submission the acronym NESB/CALD is applied.

Both NEDA and FECCA submitted papers and recommendations in the first round of submissions to this Inquiry. The points and recommendations raised here are in addition to the previous discussion.

This submission will concentrate on two pertinent issues to our shared constituency. That is the need for a culturally competent disability workforce and the use of informal carers from overseas to mitigate against the growing disability workforce shortage.

Disability workforce

The Productivity Commission in its report on the Contribution of the Not-For-Profit Sector from 11 February 2010 is the key reference point for this submission, in particular as it relates to the findings of chapter 10 Not-For-Profit Workforce¹.

The report noted that the Not-For-Profit organisations (NFPs) in the community services sector appear to experience the greatest challenges in attracting and retaining employees and volunteers. That addressing these challenges is vital to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of these organisations, especially those delivering government funded community services.

The report makes a number of observations on issues that influence the effectiveness of NFPs:

- the impact of professionalisation on costs of delivering services
- difficulties attracting and retaining employees due to low wages
- high levels of employee turnover within the sector
- a lack of career paths and training opportunities.

In 2008, 64 per cent of community service organisations reported difficulty in attracting appropriately qualified staff (ACOSS cited in PC, 2010). The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) confirmed these findings on skills shortages for social workers and welfare workers.

It also noted that the skills shortages are concentrated particularly in rural, regional and remote areas.

Referring to the submissions to the National Disability Strategy it was reported that many staff in this sector were poorly trained, lacked sensitivity and offered inadequate or poor quality care that, in some cases, extended to negligence (NPWDACC cited in PC, 2010).

It is beyond doubt that retaining staff is a critical issue for organisations as continuity of service is an important element in delivering quality services.

DEEWR's analysis demonstrates that projected employment growth in 'Other Social Assistance Services' (community services) is strong in the short to medium term, with a projected annual growth rate of 3.7 per cent per annum from 2009 to 2014.

Access Economics informed that the number of older Australians with dementia is projected to increase by 4.2 per cent per annum from 2009 to 2030.

Of importance with this projection is the well documented knowledge of language regression back to the first language for people with dementiaⁱⁱ.

In line with numerous other reports, the NFP report fails to acknowledge the need for culturally competence as part of the workforce skills shortage.

The lack of skills and knowledge in cultural competence amongst staff and the disability service system, as a whole, act as a significant barrier for people from NESB/CALD with disability.

Regular feedback from consumers evidences a shortage of support workers in general and in particular accessing support workers who are culturally aware and respectful or from NESB/CALD, let alone from specific language or cultural groups.

These barriers need to be addressed at all levels to guarantee quality service delivery.

Internationally, human service agencies and providers have used a *cultural competence* framework in order to improve their effectiveness in meeting the needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Essentially, cultural competence is about acceptance and respect for cultural diversity at the individual, organisational and systemic levels. Its aim is to develop the capacity of services to respond meaningfully to diversity in the communities they serve.

Key strategies using this approach include:

- Affecting cultural change in the organization through continual education and training.
- Involvement of NESB consumers in planning and governance of organisation.

- Use of tools to evaluate the cultural competence of service information, community education and referral, assessment processes, service delivery, complaint and feedback measurement, service planning and policy and quality assessment.
- Service by service examination of need to provide specialist cultural and language appropriate services through employment of bilingual workers and recruitment of people from NESB in order to best service target group.

A culturally competent disability system should:

- value diversity
- undertake regular cultural self-assessment
- be aware of the dynamics which occur when cultures interact
- institutionalise cultural knowledge
- adapt service delivery so that it reflects an understanding of the diversity between and within cultures

Recommendation

The proposed NDIS applies a cultural competence approach as part of its design, implementation and monitoring processes, effectively setting a cultural competence standard for staff recruitment and training.

The proposed NDIS supports a long term skilled permanent migration strategy that identifies culturally competent disability support workers as part of the skills shortage within the disability sector.

NEDA and FECCA note that the recommendation for long term skilled permanent migration is specifically important. The permanency is warranted given the long term projected ageing demographic and the growing proportion of non English speaking background people who form part of this population. Further, the transferability of culturally competent / multi-lingual skills between the aged and disability sectors foster a strong basis for people with cultural competent support skills to be identified through general skilled migration programs.

Informal Carers

The Productivity Commission report on the Not-For-Profit sector also looked at the situation of informal carers who were recognised as a large and under-recognised part of the community services workforce. According to the ABS in 2003, there were around 2.6 million carers.

It was noted that 'informal carers are instrumental in providing assistance to people with a disability and the aged in their own homes.'

The estimated value of services provided by all informal carers was assessed as exceeding \$27 billion in 2005-06 by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

The report further noted that the availability of informal carers is projected to fall as the number of older persons and prevalence of disability increases. The report found that without additional support, the expected decline in the availability of informal carers will intensify future workforce shortages in aged care and disability services.

This assessment, lead the Productivity Commission to recommendation 10.3:

The Australian Government, in consultation with Skills Australia, should commission the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council to undertake workforce planning for the community services sector having regard to the current and future workforce challenges arising from growing demand and increasing supply constraints.

NEDA estimates that one in every four people with disability is a person of either first or second generation Non English Speaking Background; that is around 1 million people.

Based on the significant under-utilisation of people from NESB with disability of government funded disability services as reported in the PC's reporting on Government Servicesⁱⁱⁱ, the role of informal carers becomes even more pertinent.

On 18 January 2011 the Government decided to cap the Other Family (Migrant) (Class BO) visas; and Other Family (Residence) (Class BU) visas to 750 in the financial year 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011

These visa categories cover Carer, Remaining Relatives and Aged Dependent Relative visas and in a clarification letter from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (March 2011) it was substantiated to NEDA that the Carer Visa for the above period was capped to 400-450.

This decision appears to be entirely counterintuitive to the situation of workforce and carer shortages and community need.

Recommendation

The proposed NDIS supports the uncapping of Carer Visas and promotes such visas as one option for offsetting the skill shortage within the disability sector, especially as this relates to cultural competence skills.

That is the carer visas should not be seen as a substitute to the previous recommendation.

Conclusion

This submission concentrates on the need for cultural competence in the delivery of disability services to people from NESB/CALD with disability.

Effective cultural competence on individual, organisational and systemic levels will go a long way towards addressing current inequities for people with disability who share life experiences and outcomes other than those of the Anglo-Saxon community.

The recommendation focuses on two aspects of one strategy, thus the recommendations are not believed to be effective in isolation. It is believed that it is critical for the disability workforce as a whole to become culturally competent and that at the same time culturally competent carers should be an option, a choice.

ⁱ Productivity Commission 2010, http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/94568/14-chapter10.pdf

ⁱⁱ McMurtray A, Saito E, Nakamoto B. *Language preference and development of dementia among bilingual individuals*, Hawaii Med J. 2009 Oct; 68(9):223-6, University of Hawai'i, USA

ⁱⁱⁱ Productivity Commission 2011 http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0016/105352/068-chapter14-chapter.pdf