

Productivity Commission Submission

Disability Care & Support Inquiry

In support of Melissa Noonan, Executive Officer, Limbs 4 Life Incorporated's Submission Aug.2010

Mollie Jones, Life Member

Amputee Association of Sydney

New South Wales 2152

This submission contains NO confidential material.

Dear Madam/Sir,

I would like to make the following points to the Disability Care & Support Inquiry. I have read the preliminary report and am still very concerned that the matter of services available to the AMPUTEE section of the Australian community is still not being addressed as it should be.

Most amputees have an acquired disability, as Melissa has explained in her excellent description of our lives. As individuals, we experience much difficulty in accepting our altered body shape and image. As Melissa shows, leg loss, whether below or above knee level, predominates amongst us. So loss of mobility is our greatest challenge. Individually we vary considerably. These days many of us value help and advice from physiotherapists as well as prosthetists when our return to active life is possible. When weeks or perhaps months are spent in rehabilitation, we discover how our body's ability to adapt is helped by exercises to maintain muscle strength. This must happen before we can wear an artificial limb and stop sitting, especially if our limb loss occurred after fifty years of age.

When amputees reach their seventies and body change becomes a factor that affects the fit of their prosthetic limb, it is galling to have to wait for a statutory three years to obtain a new or better fitting limb as per the current rules in New South Wales.

As Melissa points out, we need to be treated individually and if we have managed to keep fit by keeping up with our favourite sport, we should not have to stop because our limb no longer fits our altering frame.

Sometimes I wish that non-amputees who suggest guidelines for programmes of financial support could think of prosthetic limbs in the same way as they do a far more common prosthesis, a set of dentures. The skill required by a limb prosthetist grows as he practises, as does a dental technician's, but to a greater degree. Limbs cannot be sold off the shelf anymore than teeth can. To suggest otherwise is financial folly.