

29 April 2011

Inquiry into Disability Care and Support
Productivity Commission
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Disability Care and Support Draft Report

The Residential Development Council welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Productivity Commission in response to the release of the *Disability Care and Support Overview and Recommendations Draft Report* in February 2011. Comments and recommendations in response to the draft report are outlined below.

The Property Council supports this review of disability care provision in Australia and the development of a National Disability Strategy to improve the quality of life and increase economic and social participation for people with disability and their carers.

Recommendations

1. The Productivity Commission should pursue the proposal for the new model for housing for people with long-term disability which is based on 'cashing out' the costs of public housing and specialised accommodation.
2. The new National Disability Insurance Scheme should provide people with disability with more choice about their living arrangements, especially with respect to their housing type and location.
3. The National Disability Insurance Scheme should provide funding for home modifications for privately-owned housing and the old stock of disability-unfriendly public housing as this is often the primary form of accommodation for people with a disability. This will create housing that is designed to meet the specific needs of the individual.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

The Productivity Commission recommends that a new national scheme be implemented, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), that provides insurance cover for all Australians in the event of significant disability. Within this scheme, the needs of people with a disability and their carers would be rigorously assessed, which would lead to individualised support packages.

The Residential Development Council welcomes the increased choice and the recognition of the need for individualised support packages. Specifically, the Residential Development Council supports funding for home modifications for privately-owned housing and the ageing stock of public housing, noting that such housing is often the key form of accommodation for people with a disability.

The Commission made a further proposal within the NDIS for an entirely new model for housing for people with long-term disability, based on 'cashing out' the costs of public housing and specialised accommodation. This mechanism would allow people to decide where they wish to live and in what type of dwelling, and enable them to add their own finances to the 'cashed out' amount, effectively allowing individuals to match their needs with suitable accommodation.

The Residential Development Council strongly supports this proposal as people with disabilities deserve the same rights as people without disabilities to live in the house and neighbourhood of their choice. This proposal provides flexibility for the recipients in determining how they utilise the resources to which they are entitled for appropriate accommodation to match their specific needs.

From the Residential Development Council's perspective, the key benefits of this proposal are that it will enable people with a disability to:

- stay in their own house and use the 'cashed out' amount to retrofit the house to meet their needs; and
- add their own resources to the 'cashed out' amount to choose more appropriate accommodation in their own neighbourhood, or a neighbourhood of their choice that provides access to essential services.

National Disability Insurance Scheme Governance

The Residential Development Council supports the Productivity Commission recommendation that a federal agency, the National Disability Insurance Agency, be created to oversee the NDIS. This agency would have strong governance arrangements to ensure it is sustainable, and legislation that protects the scheme from political influences.

From the Residential Development Council's perspective, the key benefit of these governance arrangements is that the support packages would be portable across state and territory borders, as would assessments of need, providing people with disabilities flexibility in determining their living arrangements.

Conclusion

The Productivity Commission notes that objectives for developing the National Disability Strategy include enhancing the quality of life and increasing the economic and social participation for people with disability and their carers.

The Residential Development Council welcomes this review supports the objectives of the Strategy, especially the exploration of alternative approaches to funding and delivering disability services. This includes the proposal for the new model for housing for people with long-term disability based on 'cashing out' the costs of public housing and specialised accommodation.

Yours sincerely

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