

1.0 About Latrobe City

Latrobe City is made up of four major urban centres: Churchill, Moe/Newborough, Morwell and Traralgon, with smaller townships of Boolarra, Glengarry, Toongabbie, Tyers, Traralgon South, Yallourn North, and Yinnar. With a population of over 73,000, the beautiful and highly productive Latrobe Valley is located at the gateway to Gippsland in the South East corner of the state of Victoria only 70 minutes from the outskirts of Melbourne. Latrobe City is today one of Australia's major provincial centres. Latrobe City is home to regional headquarters for significant government and private organisations, education centres, such as Monash University Gippsland, Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE, and Apprenticeship Group Australia.

2.0 Introduction

The National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and the Productivity Commission Inquiry and recommendations on Disability Care and Support have the potential to transform the lives of many Australians with a disability. For this to occur, a co-ordinated approach by all levels of government is required. Latrobe City is proud of its record in providing equitable access for people with a disability to its facilities and services, building inclusive communities through community development programs and providing high quality direct care services to people with a disability.

We look forward to being part of a range of reforms to ensure people with a disability have access to relevant and timely support to enable them to reach their full potential and make the life choices available to all members of the community.

3.0 Community Engagement and Consultation

To ensure that the views of people with a disability and carers are included in the way disability services are delivered in the future, Latrobe City convened two focus groups in partnership with the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO). The focus groups were held in Traralgon on 1 April 2011 with a total of 28 people attending. The groups were made up of 27 people with a disability and 1 family carer.

The focus groups were facilitated by the Chief Executive Officer of AFDO with support from the Latrobe City's Disability Services Officer and Rural Access Project Officer.

4.0 Key Points Raised at Focus Groups

- All attendees indicated 'in principle' support for a NDIS and NDHS.
- Support packages need to be adequate to meet required support needs.
- If OH&S regulations require that more than one paid carer is required to provide support, the person receiving the support should not be penalised by receiving less hours of care.
- If minimum shift times are introduced by service providers (e.g. 3 hour minimum shift), the person receiving the support should not be penalised by receiving less hours of care.
- Non-medical support services for people with mental illness should be included in the schemes.

- The proposed definitions for eligibility for the NDIS may exclude some types of disabilities and conditions. Definitions of eligibility need to be clearly defined and broad.
- The provision of Auslan interpreters for people who are Deaf should be included in the NDIS.
- There needs to be a broad definition of aids and equipment which are eligible for funding (e.g. contact lenses are not currently eligible for funding).
- The system needs to be flexible enough to include people with episodic support needs.
- People should be able to get the level of care they need to live a fulfilled life, not just the basic services.
- Attendees agreed with the proposal that packages be consistent and portable Australia wide.
- Funding needs to be allocated for advocacy, case management and brokerage.
- People need to be able to have a review of their support needs or assessment at any time.
- The NIIS needs to include a clear definition of 'catastrophic injury'.
- The NDIS and NIIS need to have processes and resources built in to support people with a disability to make their own decisions.
- People need to be able to take advantage of the market to get the best price for the aids and equipment they need. This could be achieved by allowing people to 'cash out' their allocation for aids and equipment.
- 'Cashing out' the support allocation gives people with a disability more control and choice.
- People with a disability should be included as members of the 'Expert Committee' which will be set up to govern the new schemes.
- People with a disability should be heavily represented on the 'Advisory Council'.
- The principle of 'Nothing About Us Without Us' should apply to all aspects of the NDIS and NIIS.
- The NDIS and NIIS need to include complaint mechanisms that are independent of both assessors and support providers.