

Disability Care and Support: Comment on the Draft report of the Productivity Commission

I welcome the draft report and will restrict my comments to two points in this personal statement.

1. The stress on developing markets and quasi markets for the delivery of services is admirable but the implementation of such reform should not be contingent on the full operation or funding of the NDIS. In the event that the full scheme is not implemented by government e.g. due to perceived fiscal constraints, then the Commission should still recommend that the efficiencies and gains to the disabled and carers need to be sought in appropriate reforms. Such reforms include the introduction of widespread use of individualised accounts for funding and the stress on choice by the client in service provision. Many families can live with 'less than we need' but the lack of choice is debilitating as we beg and debate with agencies and bureaucrats.
2. It seems to me that the draft report is very adult centric in that it pays too little attention to children with disabilities and their very different situation and needs. Given the power of state education bureaucracies (and education unions) I can appreciate why the Commission would shy away from including education in its purview for the NDIS. However this is misplaced and leaves children abandoned to the whim of these powers. In autism the situation is dire. Education authorities are not responsive to the needs and perspectives of children and parents. The waste and poor delivery are legend; I am sure the Commission has a deal of evidence from advocacy groups. Money is wasted and problems are denied or swept under the carpet – advocacy is responded to with frequent dishonesty by the Education Department in my experience in the ACT over many years. If the Commission thinks it's all too hard then at least recommend that parents can cash out a large portion of the funds states and territories spend on their disabled children's education and allow families to make their own provision for their child's education and therapies within guidelines monitored by the NDIS. Lengthy talk in the draft report, of early intervention in the case of children (with autism) is meaningless between the ages of 5-18 if children and parents do not have choice for a large part of the day in the formative years. I could send my child to a expensive private school with the money the ACT government wastes on his indifferent education. In the past it has been very bad with four schools on as many years – and still high school to come. I am happy to provide more evidence and specific cases if required by the Commission.