



*Creating a positive future for people with disability and their families*

**Submission**  
to  
**Productivity Commission**  
**Draft Report: Disability Care and Support**  
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# Blue Skies

The Blue Skies Team extends our strong support for the Productivity Commission's draft report on Disability Care and Support. The draft report closely aligns with the Blue Skies Vision for a positive future for people with disability and their families. It is clear that fundamental reform is required to achieve this vision.

The Blue Skies submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability Care and Support offered four key elements in a new framework of thinking which would avoid a “blow-out” of costs and work towards *a good life* for people with disability and a fair and effective service system.

1. an entitlement to **adequate, timely and appropriate support** to people with disability
2. **increased empowerment** to people with disability and protection of their citizen rights
3. capacity for people with disability to **contribute to society through valued roles** in work, leisure, creativity and spirituality in the communities of their choice
4. opportunities to **maintain and strengthen meaningful relationships** with families and enduring friends.

Central to the Blue Skies concept of *a good life*, is the belief that people must have something to look forward too; something good to do; and someone to love and be loved by. This concept necessarily implies that *a good life* is one in which there is meaningful interconnectedness within one's community. A sense of belonging requires that people are *of* community and not merely *in* community. In addition belonging is closely aligned with connection to *place* or home. Responses that aspire to achieving *a good life* for people with disability and their families therefore must acknowledge people's embeddedness in context (i.e. social, economic, political, historical, physiological, cultural, moral and physical space).

The Blue Skies Team request that the Productivity Commission expands upon the concept of *capacity building* to ensure the appropriate investment is made in what we believe will be an integral and fundamental strategy necessary to reposition people with disability as valued contributors *of* their communities.

There is extensive research and literature in the area of community development which can be drawn upon for the purposes of expanding upon *capacity building* as a central and necessary strategy for the reform to be successful, supported and sustained. Asset Based Community Development (developed by John McKnight and John Kretzmann) informs us that three essential qualities must be present for effective community development to occur. It must be:

- 1) Asset Based: focuses on identifying and making visible the assets that can be mobilized and made productive in a community
- 2) Internally Focussed: recognises an inside-out approach to building community as required where the individuals from the community are the drivers of the development
- 3) Relationship Driven: acknowledges interdependence (or connection through relationships) as intrinsic to strengthening individuals and communities and hence relationship building strategies are critical



Drawing from principles of Asset Based Community Development a distinct shift needs to be planned for in order to move from the current *needs driven* approach to a *capacity-focused development* approach. For people to be considered of community there must be opportunity for people to contribute their unique gifts, talents, experiences and knowledge within their community. Capacity building needs to be complimented by the cultivation of the right spaces and opportunities in which people's capacities can be engaged to enrich and strengthen their own lives and the life of community.

In the absence of an investment to cultivate these opportunities, one will merely work against the other in terms of enhancing capacity. For genuine systemic reform to be supported and sustained, the shift in focus to *capacity-focused development* will need to occur and a significant investment in this area will need to be made involving people with disability; their families; service providers; and the wider community. Targeted strategies to realise this change will necessarily include roles being created to intentionally drive and support change. Please refer to Appendix 1, excerpt from the *Principles and Elements of the Blue Skies Scenario* for information related to Community Builder and Community Navigator roles that can support capacity building strategies and work in the areas required.

In addition service providers will require support to re-imagine, reconfigure and implement new service design/s to respond well to broad scale reform. In a change process of this magnitude it is critical that appropriate *capacity building* support and opportunity is afforded to service providers for the organisational transformatory processes that will be required to lead through this change. The Productivity Commission has highlighted the potential workforce shortage issues that must be navigated. It is therefore critical that the current workforce is sustained through the substantial redesign of services and roles and that appropriate *capacity building* strategies are in place to support policy, program, practice and cultural change.

The Blue Skies Team therefore recommends that consideration be afforded to this area by the Productivity Commission in the final report on Disability Care and Support and this consideration include the following:

- Articulate in some detail the *capacity building* strategies and where these strategies are to be located
- Identify from what source and what investment will these *capacity building* strategies be developed and sustained
- Recommend a clear framework is established for tracking and evaluating the impact of *capacity building* strategies (e.g. use of social return on investment measurement / monitoring tools)

The Blue Skies Team would be more than happy to engage with the Productivity Commission further should any further information or consultation be required.

**The Blue Skies Team**