

The Presiding Commissioner  
Productivity Commission Enquiry  
Disability Care and Support

## COMMENTS FROM MARGE & JEFF BISHOP

We make the following comments as the parents of a 39 year old daughter with Down Syndrome. She has lived with us and we have cared for her since her birth. She works 13 hours per week in supported employment, earning \$3.45 per hour and she also receives the disability support pension. We are now both in our 80s and, by necessity, are in the process of getting our daughter established in other accommodation where limited support and supervision will be available. We have been heavily involved in the Stepping Stones For Life project in Canberra which has been of great help in the planning activities but, unfortunately, preferred plans cannot be implemented unless funds are available.

We would like you know that;

1. We support the general thrust of the recommendations in the draft report.
2. From our own first-hand experience we know that your first key point that "the current disability support system is underfunded, unfair, fragmented, and inefficient..." is completely correct. We would perhaps add the word 'inequitable'; similar to unfair but not exactly the same.
3. We strongly support the establishment of a NDIS as a practicable, sensible, equitable and affordable way to approach the problem.
- 4 We agree that rigorous assessment of people with disabilities and their carers will be needed to weed out malingerers or those who would try to 'milk the system', to the detriment of genuine people with real disabilities. Therefore, competent people need to be employed and paid appropriately. We urge that great care be taken in selecting staff.
5. We strongly support the concept of empowering the families to choose their own service providers and to direct the funding to areas of need they think are most important. It is important that the scheme not be captured by ideologues who might wish to restrict funding only to uses which they see as consistent with their particular ideology. Guidance, not control, is needed in regard to the use of funds. There are many valid models and individuals must be allowed to choose the one that is best for them.
6. We strongly support your recommendation that the Australian Government be responsible for the scheme and its funding, as it is with aged care. Buck passing between Commonwealth and State/territory governments has been one of the problems with the present arrangements.
7. We strongly agree that the level of funding needs to be increased significantly to meet unmet demand. The disability sector has lacked the resources and lobbying power of other sectors and, as a result, has been starved and neglected for years.

8. We agree that all funds for the disability sector should come from normal government funding (increasing taxes or redirecting spending from other areas). Disability is non selective in that it strikes anywhere across the whole spectrum of society. No section of the community should feel advantaged or disadvantaged by the introduction of a NDIS; it would provide insurance, and indeed assurance, for all.

9. We are disturbed that, under your present recommendations, the NDIS would not be commencing until 2014, i.e. for another 3 years or be fully operational until 2015, i.e. another 4 years. We understand that it will involve a major restructuring of disability assistance models but governments can react quickly in cases of emergencies or a crisis e.g. in times of war, terrorist attack, flood, cyclones, earthquakes etc. We believe that your draft report shows that the disability sector is in crisis, and has been for a long time, and deserves not quick but immediate action. The fact that it has been in crisis for so long should not be used as justification for letting that crisis continue for another 3 or 4 years. The problem has been discussed for decades and the NDIS itself has had quite a long gestation period. There are thousands of families struggling financially and emotionally right now. They are in crisis; now!. We strongly urge you to bring the target dates forward by at least twelve months.

Marge & Jeff Bishop  
3 May 2011