

Submission to the Productive Commission's Discussion Paper on NDIS Costs

McAuley Community Services for Women welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this discussion paper on NDIS Costs.

McAuley Community Services for Women receives over \$500,000 in residential rehabilitation and home and community care funding annually. This funding provides accommodation and tailored support to close to 60 women annually at an individual cost of around \$22,000 per annum. This funding will be taken up by NDIS and lost to women who are homeless and ineligible for NDIS packages.

Furthermore, at an average price of around \$10,000 per person per annum, it is unlikely that the whole needs of those who are eligible for NDIS will be met.

We are advocating for sufficient funds to be retained to provide accommodation and support services to people who are homeless and who also experience complex and multiple needs.

Key points

Mental Health Services

We note the findings in the discussion paper that mental health services are an area of concern.

This is supported by the National Mental Health Commission's report on Mental Health Programs and Services in which it estimated that about 700 000 Australians experience a severe mental illness in any one year. However, according to the NDIA, only around 64 000 people with psychosocial disability are expected to be eligible for individual packages in the NDIS.

The discussion paper notes there needs to be support for people with mental health illnesses outside of the scheme — a responsibility that remains (largely) with State and Territory Governments.

In 2011, the Commission recommended that people with psychosocial disability be supported through the NDIS. This was on the basis that: the day-to-day support needs for people with significant and enduring psychiatric disability are often the same as people who have an intellectual disability or an acquired brain injury. The Commission also recognised that some important parts of the care requirements of people with psychosocial disability — namely community supports — would be best met through the NDIS. This is because the NDIS provides them with the wider benefits of the scheme, including personalisation of supports to meet the needs of the individual, more choice in

what supports are provided, when and by who, and greater access to early intervention supports.

Whilst we agree in part to this analysis; our experience has shown that the ability to rapidly scale support up or down, ie through the provision of a respite bed, meals and social interaction, can prevent repeat episodes of hospitalisation and homelessness.

NDIS does not enable this level of service provision, which then becomes a cost to the community in the long-term.

We are particularly concerned about the provision of services for those people who are not eligible, particularly those who are homelessness and experience complex and multiple needs.

The rapid rollout of NDIS, and the uncertainty around who is and who isn't eligible, is having a direct impact on the ability of the community sector to support people with complex needs.

This is due to the shifting of community mental health funding in Victoria into the NDIS. The situation is being compounded by the withdrawal of support from Organisations who have traditionally supported people experiencing mental illness to remain safely housed. We are anticipating a shifting of costs from what was the community mental health sector in Victoria, to homelessness.

Recommendations

That the Productivity Commission urges the State and Territory Governments to stop offsetting funding from mental health support programs to the NDIS.

That the State and Territory Governments clarify what supports will be available for people with a mental illness who do not meet the NDIS eligibility.

That the Productivity Commission clarifies the eligibility criteria for psychosocial disability under the NDIS. We refer to the Mental Health Australia's viewpoint that the definition should be made public and consistent with the UN Charter on the Rights of People with a Disability, and the work of the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum.

About McAuley Community Services for Women

McAuley Community Services for Women, is a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy, we provide safe housing, education, employment and children's programs for women and their children who are escaping family violence and for women who are homeless, many living with mental illness.

McAuley Community Services for Women

18 Robertson Street, Kensington VIC 3031
T: (03) 9371 6600 E: mcsw@mcauleycsw.org.au W: mcauleycsw.org.au
ABN: 85696671223

McAuley Community Services for Women incorporates early intervention and response strategies, for example: as mentioned earlier, a respite bed at McAuley House which enables women living in their own housing to manage their mental illness through afterhours; week-end and overnight support as required

In 2016, we assisted over 600 women and children to rebuild their lives, supporting them on their journey towards independence and safer futures. We run family violence and homelessness services that are holistic in approach, providing a joined-up service for women leaving family violence through to providing them with help to secure employment:

McAuley Care: Victoria's only 24/7 safe, accessible crisis accommodation and support for women and their children, escaping family violence, as well as a refuge program.

McAuley House provides accommodation and support for women who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness, many with poor physical and mental health. The women who are supported through McAuley House will be the most impacted by the loss of services. Each year we provide accommodation and support to between 60 – 70 women through McAuley House.

In January 2017, we surveyed the 24 women currently living at McAuley House to determine who will not be eligible for NDIS. The results were:

- Six women are not eligible because of their citizen status.
- At this stage because of a lack of definition we are unsure about the remaining 18 women.

Of the 24 sample group:

- 96% experience episodic mental health
- 46% have chronic physical conditions
- 42% experience chronic suicide ideations.
- 100% of women were homeless before coming into McAuley House

McAuley Works is a jobs-ready and employment program for women experiencing homelessness or family violence. Using a case management model, McAuley Works provides intensive, tailored services to each woman it supports, including post-employment assistance, with the single aim of helping women secure good jobs or to access training that will help themselves and their families financially.

We also run Engage to Change, a prevention program aimed at educating employers and workforces about what family violence is, how to recognise it, help women who are experiencing family violence by referring them to further help.

McAuley Community Services for Women

18 Robertson Street, Kensington VIC 3031
T: (03) 9371 6600 E: mcsw@mcauleycsw.org.au W: mcauleycsw.org.au
ABN: 85696671223