

24 August 2018

Productivity Commission

RE: National Disability Agreement Review

Tandem is the Victorian peak body representing family and friends (mental health carers) supporting people living with mental health issues. We advocate for family and friend involvement in planning and care, participation in system change and support.

Tandem is making this submission to express support for the continuation of a National Disability Agreement as part of the **National Disability Agreement Review** and the related **Productivity Commission Issues Paper July 2018**.

The greatest utility of the NDA is that it “[a]ffirms the commitment of all governments to work in partnership, and with stakeholders including people with disability their families and carers, to improve outcomes for people with disability and to clarify roles and responsibilities” (COAG 2009, p.2).

Further it provides clarity on, nationally agreed objectives, roles and responsibilities of state and commonwealth and lays out parameters for the tracking of implementation, benchmarking and performance on targets and initiatives. It articulates the nationally agreed upon reform agenda

It is Tandem’s position that although the NDIS is continuing its roll out (nearly completed in Victoria), the NDIS will not and cannot replace the NDA in providing this covenant and the above functions. **The NDIS, is a mechanism through which some of these items are actioned, not the body or framework in which they are housed.** When the rollout is complete it will not acquit the commonwealth of the need and responsibility to continue work on these items. It therefore stands to reason the NDA remain, and Tandem exhorts the Productivity Commission to give consideration to this need..

The rollout of the NDIS has revealed that many Australians will require mainstream and community services that will not be replaced by the NDIS, and which still need to exist outside the NDIS. The scope and funding of the 2nd tier of the NDIS, the Integration and Linkages (ILC) are completely insufficient to fill the coming void.

Mainstream and community disability and mental health services are adapting to the new service landscape. It is imperative that while they go through this transition they still be subject to a national framework that sets out a broad reform agenda, and specifies which level of government is responsible for funding and policy direction in every component of service delivery. **This is particularly pertinent to the psychosocial rehabilitation sector, which exists in a grey area that allows both the commonwealth and state/territory governments to retreat from responsibility for the sector as is politically expedient.**

The importance of a national Agreement is very evident when looking to other sectors. For instance, in the area of Housing, which does not have a National agreement, the failure to stem the rise of people becoming homeless and rough sleeping is a stern reminder of what could happen should a coordinated approach and demarcations between the states, territories and commonwealth not exist.*

It is important NDA should of course remain a living document, subject to external stimulus to change. The scope of the NDA must change to incorporate the reality of the NDIS and the ICSS but crucially, the NDA must remain.

* (ABS Census, 2016).

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Tandem acknowledges the support
of the Victorian Government.