



Hobsons Bay CITY COUNCIL

21st July 2010

Ms Patricia Scott
Disability Care and Support
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

Ask for: Maria Cesarello
Phone: (03) 9932 1118
Our Ref: A1171366

Dear Commissioner Scott,

INQUIRY INTO DISABILITY CARE AND SUPPORT

Reference is made to the Productivity Commission's issues paper on long-term disability care and support.

The Hobsons Bay City Council welcomes the proposed insurance-based scheme, providing cover to those Australians with a disability who need assistance with daily living tasks (self care, communication and mobility).

The Council recognises that the proposed National Disability Insurance Scheme would enable people with a disability to be at the centre of a new service delivery system, which would empower them to make choices by providing essential care, support, therapy, aids, equipment, home modifications and access to the community, education and training.

This is in line with the commitment set out in the Council's Disability Action Plan 2008 – 2012, which aims to improve the range of flexible, direct support services provided to residents with a disability, their families and carers.

The Council also acknowledges that the proposed insurance scheme will not only meet the needs of people with disabilities, their families and carers, but that it provides an opportunity to address the many inefficiencies in the current disability service system.

Please find attached the Council's submission to the Productivity Commission's Issues Paper. The Council looks forward to reviewing the proposed way forward for this much needed disability scheme when the final report is lodged in 2011.

Yours faithfully

Bill Jaboor
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Disability Care and Support Productivity Commission Issues Paper Hobsons Bay City Council Submission

Why is a Long Term Disability Care and Support Scheme Needed?

The Hobsons Bay City Council represents a municipality where approximately 18.6% (or 5,656) of its 80,868 residents live with a disability. This submission incorporates the comments and expertise of the Council's Disability Advisory Committee who represent the needs of residents with a disability.

The Council recognises the urgency for improvements in what is available for people with a disability, and welcomes the work being undertaken by the Productivity Commission to examine avenues by which to improve the disability service system in Australia. Council advocates for a proposed scheme that places people with a disability at the centre of the service delivery system, and which empowers people to make choices about their need for essential care, support, therapy, aids, equipment, home modifications and access to the community, education and training.

This is in line with the commitment set out in the Council's Disability Action Plan 2008 – 2012, which aims to improve the range of flexible, direct support services provided to residents with a disability, their families and carers.

The Council also acknowledges that the proposed insurance scheme should focus on meeting the needs of people with a disability of all ages, their families and carers so long as the disability was not acquired as a result of natural ageing. The proposed scheme should be seen as opportunity to address the many inefficiencies in the current disability service system.

Who Should be Eligible?

It is the Council's view that the position that the eligibility criteria for the proposed scheme should not solely focus on the existence of disability, rather the level of need that a person requires to undertake their daily living tasks. It is submitted that there should be national defining criteria for people who would be eligible for the proposed scheme. The defining criteria should also be supported by national service standards and consist of physical, intellectual and behavioural measures. Consideration should also take into account people:

- with profound and severe disabilities
- living with ageing carers
- who experience other disadvantages such as poverty, homelessness, and language/cultural barriers

The scheme should focus on providing assistance and support to people with disabilities in a timely and responsive manner. This will ensure people receive the support they need, when they need it, while also ensuring the scheme is effective in avoiding higher costs associated with people needs' compounding as a result of inadequate support, service, equipment etc.

How Should People's Needs Be Assessed?

It is important for the proposed scheme to simplify assessment processes and consider mechanisms by which relevant information can be shared (based on informed consent by the person). This is limited at present with many service providers carrying out similar assessments to gain similar information. A more integrated service system would ensure that any comprehensive

or specialist assessments required would build on, rather than repeat, information collected at others levels of assessment.

One of the major flaws of the current service system is that it is fragmented. As such, one of the improvements that the proposed scheme should deliver is better integration and reduced duplication.

One method of achieving this could be through the establishment of an integrated information management system that lists all people who are in receipt of the proposed scheme. The information on this system about the level of need and required level of support would be available to all service providers; both generic and specialist, to assist in ensuring that the services people use are provided in an integrated way.

Such a system could reduce delays in providing services, reduce duplication of effort and wasteful resources, and reduce intrusion into people's lives.

What Services Should Be Included?

The Council considers it important that the proposed scheme increases choice and access to traditional services such as personal care services, respite and accommodation, aids and equipment, community access and support, income support, transport, and home modifications. The proposed scheme should also include increased services and supports to enhance opportunities for people with disabilities to pursue individual lifestyles and aspirations including:

- finding and maintaining meaningful training and employment, with dignity of risk (without fear of jeopardising receipt of other supports if not successful eg. Disability Support Pension)
- engaging in social and recreational activities
- enjoying meaningful friendships and relationships, and
- having a sense of belonging in their community.

The current system of support for people with disabilities is complex fragmented and often creates unnecessary dependency and limitation people with disabilities' potential. As such the proposed scheme should:

- provide for mechanisms which identify a person's needs as early on in life as possible to ensure supports are in place to allow people to live within their community from the outset
- be easy to navigate by reducing the number of professionals people with disability need to be engaged with to receive services and supports
- have a planned point of entrance where information about the range of available services can be obtained easily in a variety of formats
- have a streamlined assessment processes for eligibility, need and priority
- have clear referral pathways and equitable access to a range of services
- be responsive and provide people with disabilities with planned and timely supports and services (in particular in transition or a changing need situation such as starting or leaving school, seeking work, moving house, retirement).
- provide people with disabilities choice and flexibility, in particular, in cases where a service is deemed inappropriate, people with disabilities should be able to move to leave the service without fearing that they will be placed on waiting lists
- be available in a uniform manner across the country to allow for people to move if their circumstances change eg: marriage, employment
- Ensure that service reforms of the nature proposed are accompanied by investment in community education and in building the capability of service providers within and outside of government.

Who Should Make the Decisions?

People with a disability and their carers have increasingly fought and been given more control to make decisions about their own lives. The proposed scheme should build on a human rights based approach and allow for person-centred approaches to planning and service delivery, where people with a disability are involved in planning for their own futures.

The proposed scheme should have provisions for independent, informed choices that are in the best interests of a person with a disability.

A person-centred approach to service delivery should also include an avenue for people to appeal against decisions made by others that they believe are not correct. A complaint mechanism can be in the form of a National Disability Services Commission, or a similar independent body to address complaints about services when they arise.

In establishing some type of an independent complaints body, the mechanism should be open, accessible and straightforward, and possibly linked to legislation.

The Vision for an Equitable National Disability Insurance Scheme

Based on the needs of people with a disability in Hobsons Bay, the Council supports a disability insurance scheme that promotes national service standards and eligibility criteria that allows for people with a disability to get the services they need, no matter where they live in Australia, in a streamlined manner.

June 2010