



Australian Federation of Disability Organisations

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Submission from the  
Australian Federation of Disability Organisations  
to the Productivity Commission

## **Contribution of the Not for Profit Sector**

This submission details how the present system of supports and services to people with disability impacts on the Non Government Sector and how this causes unneeded inefficiencies.

### **(1) An Inefficient Service Delivery System**

- (1.1) The present system of funding of not for profit organisations to deliver services to people with disability is inefficient and does not sufficiently deliver outcomes as identified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- (1.2) The UNCRPD was ratified in 2008 by the Australian Government. By ratifying the convention the Australian government committed all jurisdictions to deliver supports in line with its articles.
- (1.3) The UNCRPD has at its core a rights based approach. Unfortunately very few NGOs have the ability to deliver supports and services under this approach.
- (1.4) Inefficiencies in the delivery of services and supports are inherent in the present system of delivering these. Most organisations rely on a range of funding programs to deliver these supports and services. The cost of administering these programs is money that could be spent on enabling people to receive more supports. Monitoring programs split over state and federal systems makes it harder to identify the exact levels of unmet need among people with disability.

- (1.5) A self-directed model/approach based on individualised funding/budgets and direct payments is not only the best way of delivering supports to adhere to the UNCRPD but also will save enormous amounts in administration and funds going to case management.
- (1.6) “All the available evidence suggests that [Individualised Funding] leads to greater user satisfaction, to greater continuity of care, to fewer unmet needs, and to a more cost-effective use of scarce public resources.”<sup>1</sup>
- (1.6) For example in the last Federal budget delivered in May 2009 the continence aids scheme will be changed to provide funding directly to people with disability who require these aids. At present funding is provided to a service provider who then supplies the continence product to the person with a disability. The product is often priced at a higher price that can be bought at the local chemist. The new arrangement means not only will people with disability be able to select the product that best fits their needs they will potentially also receive more of the product as the costs associated with the middle person are cut out. The government has estimated that savings in administration will be around \$10 million per year.
- (1.7) The continence aids scheme is only a small part of service and supports for people with disability. If this principle was applied to the delivery of all supports and services the savings to government would be astronomical thereby enabling people with disability to access a much wider range of supports.
- (1.8) As mentioned earlier the present system of service delivery has huge inefficiencies. It is full of band aid approaches which are crisis driven. The system is never properly fixed resulting in funds being pumped in just to keep things afloat. Some examples of this are:
- Physical access not being properly done resulting in greater costs later on to fix things up. This is a complex issue. In some cases, public and private organizations remain ignorant of the needs of people with disability altogether, but often non-government agencies are keen to pursue full accessibility. They are simply unable to afford access consultants, the purchase of specialized equipment and the production of alternative format materials which are necessary to fully meet the needs of people with disability.
  - The built environment not being adequate resulting in people with disability needing supports to help navigate through. For instance, a person who lives very near a doctor’s surgery which is inaccessible to people who use wheelchairs will need taxi subsidies or assistance from an agency to visit another surgery in a different part of town. In the longer term, this person may find they are too isolated from a number of accessible services, and ask to move into government housing which is more

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Williams, Robbi (2007) *Individualised Funding - A summary review of its nature and impact, and key elements for success*, Julia Farr Association, Adelaide 2007

[http://www.juliafarr.org.au/doc\\_library.asp](http://www.juliafarr.org.au/doc_library.asp)

appropriately located instead of renting privately in a cheaper area which is further out.

- A plethora of funding programs and schemes with very specific criteria requiring a great deal of resources to match people to the schemes. To obtain aids and equipment, a person with disability might be able to access partial local or state government funding, depending on where they live and what their equipment needs are. In cases where they fall through the cracks, people with disability are forced to seek support to source funding in other ways.
  - Case management services needing funding to help people navigate through this maze.
  - Advocacy services to assist people to get the supports they are denied by disability service providers and generic agencies.
  - Multiple assessment processes, such as the current assessment process for people with disability who want to begin looking for work. Jobseekers are required to undertake a Job Capacity Assessment at Centrelink and a separate assessment when they are assigned to a Disability Employment Network provider. While this duplication is set to be minimized, it is just one example of a common problem.
  - Inexperienced Government workers making judgments and assessments resulting in the person with the disability not getting the supports they need. For example, it may be possible for someone with bipolar disorder to work for fifteen hours or more in one week, but no hours the next week. Some Centrelink staff might make the judgment that such a person was not eligible for Disability Support Pension, meaning they had higher stress levels, less ability to work and more health problems.
- (1.9) A system that is constantly broken is the most inefficient system not only in terms of cost but also inefficient because it does not deliver according to the principles contained in the UNCRPD.

### **Recommendation 1**

That the Productivity Commission conducts an enquiry into the present delivery of supports and services and compares this to a system that is based on funding that goes directly to the individual

## **(2) Employment of Staff**

- (2.1) Staff in NGOs are generally poorly paid with inadequate conditions.
- (2.2) There are inefficiencies in a system which constantly needs to recruit for support workers because workers do not stay due to poor wages and conditions.
- (2.3) Experienced workers are lost to the sector because of the inability of NGOs to take an industry approach to conditions and career structures.
- (2.4) For example in Victoria NGOs are currently opposing long service leave to be portable amongst their sector. Jobs are often very demanding and the value of people being able to take long service leave to recharge their batteries cannot be underestimated. The alternative is to have staff burn out, lost productivity because of stress and the loss of experience workers to government where better conditions are available.

### **Recommendation 2**

That the Productivity Commission examines the inefficiencies resulting from the loss of trained and experience staff to the NGO sector because of poor wages and conditions.

## **AFDO**

AFDO is a cross-disability human rights organisation funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Its membership consists of a number of national and State disabled people's organisations.

- Blind Citizens Australia
- Brain Injury Australia
- Deaf Australia
- Deafness Forum Limited
- National Association of People living with HIV/Aids
- National Council on Intellectual Disability
- National Ethnic Disability Alliance
- Physical Disability Council of Australia
- Women with Disabilities Australia
- Disability Resources Centre
- People with Disabilities Western Australia
- Access for All Alliance