



3rd June 2009

Not for Profit Sector
Productivity Commission
By email: nfp@pc.gov.au

Submission on the 'Contribution of the Not for Profit Sector'

Ability Options Limited welcomes the opportunity to have input into a review of the contribution of the Not for Profit Sector.

About Ability Options Limited

Ability Options, or the Association for the Assistance of Intellectually and Socially Handicapped persons as it was first called, was born in 1976 of a union between the Rotary Club of Guildford and the NSW Health Commission. At its inception the organisation was primarily focused on providing community based support to adults with an intellectual disability. Ability Options now more broadly provides support services to people with a disability.

Ability Options is a company limited by guarantee. The organisation is governed by a Board of 12 Directors who are elected on a yearly basis. The Directors are generally representative of the following 'groups':

- People with a disability;
- Relatives and friends of people with a disability; and
- Professionals and businessmen/women.

The organisation operates on a not for profit basis. The sources of funding for the different Divisions are outlined below. The organisation derives a small amount of profit through out commercial nursery which is used to provide additional services to people with a disability. The organisation has PBI status and is able to receive donations or bequests. The organisation does not engage in fundraising at the present time.

The objects of the organisation are:-

- (a) To maintain an association to promote the independence, worth and dignity of people with disabilities.
- (b) To establish residential accommodation for people with disabilities.
- (c) To promote employment opportunities and conduct work and other training for people with disabilities.
- (d) To provide counselling and any other assistance to people with disabilities to encourage and effect their assimilation into the community.
- (e) To liaise with other community agencies to improve existing services offered to people with disabilities.
- (f) To encourage and promote citizen and self advocacy for people with disabilities.

Summary of Mission and Vision

To provide people with disabilities better opportunities that will enable them to enhance their lifestyles and achieve their goals.

Our Vision is to achieve this through:

- Quality services benchmarked through national and international standards of best practice;
- To provide a range of services across Australia that will increase opportunities for independence and choice, strengthen relationships and participation within the community and produce measurable improvements in quality of life;
- Being a dynamic organisation with a focus on continuous improvement; and
- Providing people with a disability opportunity to drive change within the organisation.

Ability Options Divisions and Services

1/ Colour Options Nursery

Is a commercial producer of potted colour that supplies all the major retailers and garden centres in New South Wales. With a production capacity of over 1,000,000 plants a year, Colour Options is renowned for the exceptional quality of its Hylites potted colour, grown under the best conditions.

The nursery employs 7 staff without a disability and 18 staff with a disability – see below.

2/ Working Options

Is an innovative service assisting people with disabilities to fulfill their role as nursery workers employed by our commercial nursery, Colour Options (as above). Working in the commercial nursery enables the supported employees to learn the skills they need to pursue a career in the nursery industry. Funding is provided by FaCHSIA for supported employment. There are 18 supported employees – and as noted above.

3/ North West Personnel

Is a Disability Employment Network service that assists people with disabilities to gain and maintain open employment. Working in partnership with local businesses, schools and the broader community, specialist staff assist school leavers to plan their future employment and secure the right job.

North West Personnel currently assists over 1400 people with disabilities and employs 80 staff. This service is funded by Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

4/ Lifestyle Options

Provides accommodation services for people with a disability. This includes many people with an intellectual disability, those with complex support needs (including a dual diagnosis). Individuals are supported to live in their own home and support can range from 2 hours per week up to 24 hours per day.

The Lifestyle Enhancement program provides a wide range of community educational and recreational activities.

The Transition to Work Program is a two year program and supports individuals from school to move into employment or vocational education.

We also provide 'Self Managed' support through the Community Participation two year pilot and more recently through the Life Choices and Active Ageing day program. Self Managers have the flexibility and choice to identify and develop the resources needed to create a program that meets the cultural needs and leads to genuine inclusion in the community. This program currently provides self management support to 73 individuals and their families.

The Lifestyle Options Division provides services to over 250 individuals and employs 217 staff. Funding for these programs is from the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

(DADHC).

5/ Nepean Options

Provides specialist case management service for people with an intellectual disability living in the Penrith Local Government Area who need help to access the services they need to live in their home and community.

Assistance is provided to 21 individuals at any one time and this service employs three staff members. Funding for this program is from DADHC.

7/ The Ability Options Responsible Gambling Project

Provides support and information to funded problem gambling treatment and support services which have clients with a disability. Our specialist disability consultants support and assist clients with a disability, together with their families, significant others, carers and services. The primary focus of the Project is on people living with a cognitive impairment, who reside in NSW. This includes, but is not limited to people, with an intellectual disability, developmental disability, psychiatric disability or acquired brain injury. All services are provided free of charge, however this service does not provide a direct counselling service to clients. All clients must be referred to a problem gambling treatment service.

2 part-time psychologists work across NSW as part of this program. Funding for this program was provided by the New South Wales Government from the Responsible Gambling Fund.

8/ Administration

The activities of the organisation are supported by administrative staff, including human resources, of 17 staff members.

The organisation currently provides services to more than 1600 individuals through the above programs. Services are provided within the Western Sydney region, south to Moss Vale, and across NSW through the Self Managed Community Participation Program. The organisation employs approximately 340 staff members. 4% of employees identify as having a disability. The majority of volunteers are the Board of Directors.

We also utilise pro bono services and volunteers for specific purposes where possible. We provide student placements for University and TAFE students.

1/ Scope of the Study

Ability Options meets the criteria of a not-for profit organisation as outlined in the issues paper, pp. 1-12. The above overview of the organisation highlights the features of Ability Options in terms of our purpose, structure, legal status, taxation treatment and financing sources.

Ability Options grew out of a commitment to provide community based accommodation options for people with a disability. Not-for profit organisations, despite their variances, have historically grown out of community based initiatives and organising to meet a specific need or area of interest.

The Commissions' approach and the focus of the study as outlined in Figure 1, p. 11 is understood. This is mostly focused on services funded by governments. It includes child care services, disability, employment, mental health services, community housing providers, advocacy services, education and information services etc. The range of organisations identified in Figure 1, have significant contributions as indicators of community/civic engagement and the capacity to support social inclusion and community development which are important indicators of the 'health' of our communities. This includes the contributions of individuals, families and voluntary groups who for example run the local P&C and support school activities (such as fundraising to keep their libraries up to date, to fund facility improvements, to run a school uniform shop and the canteen, to promote family awareness and multiculturalism), to local sporting groups run by volunteers, to social entrepreneurs. The scope of the sector and its activities supports the social policy objectives of government.

Social inclusion is an enormous issue for people with a disability who represent a marginalised and often vulnerable section of our communities. A focus on social inclusion, the sustainability and strength of communities will provide positive benefits to the whole community including increased economic and social participation, civic engagement and community development. Whilst not-for profit organisations have a role to play in supporting inclusion it is at the 'grass' roots through the decision making of individuals and collectives of individuals that inclusion takes place and this is where the focus needs to be.

There needs to be a renewed focus on community development activities that occur from the bottom up, an increase in collaboration and partnership to manage complex social issues and policies and objectives underpinned by values of social justice (which we are starting to see).

Ability Options is contracted to provide government funded services to meet specific needs. The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) in NSW has a greater emphasis on a partnership approach and collaboration to meet specific policy objectives. There is scope to improve systems and processes, to reduce duplication, red tape, improve communication to improve efficiency, effectiveness, to support service responsiveness and innovation.

A greater focus on strategies to facilitate partnerships and reduce policy silos is welcomed to enable not for profit organisations to work together to meet the needs of individuals, families and communities. One example of this is the facilitation of partnerships between Community Housing Providers and Mental Health or Disability Service providers under programs such as HASI (Housing and Support Initiative in mental health) and DHASI (the Disability Housing and Support Initiative). There is a tendency for program types and the related contracts to create a level of inflexibility which can reduce efficiency.

1.1. Government response to previous studies

Inquiry into Charitable Organisations in Australia (1995)

Rec. No. 1. Quality Management

Ability Options has developed a quality management system that supports continuous improvement and our external evaluation to the Disability Service Standards. Ability Options is a quality assured organisation. This has been voluntarily entered into as part of an approach to ensure quality service delivery. This cost has been born by the organisation. There is no allowance within funding agreements to "assist in resourcing service providers to obtain initial accreditation of their quality management systems" (reference Attachment C, Rec. No. 1).

Ability Options also complies with the with the State and Federal separate audit systems. In NSW there is a tri-ennial review (Integrated Monitoring Framework - IMF) of compliance to the NSW Disability Services Act which focused on policy and procedure compliance.

The Disability Employment Network (DEN) services are outcomes focused. State delivered disability services are input and output – process – focused in terms of reporting. Ability Options is committed to the development of a sustainability framework with a specific focus on social outcomes/benefits and to identify standards of best practice that are outcome focused.

The implementation of a Quality Improvement System based on Disability Standards and a National Disability Quality Framework to replace the IMF will reduce duplication, provide an improved measure of service standards and quality. For Ability Options having a single QA framework would reduce duplication.

Standardisation of overarching legislation and regulation affecting the sector across jurisdictions and program types would reduce duplication, improve effectiveness and efficiency. This would benefit members of the community and organisations alike across multiple jurisdictions. For example, this includes Occupational Health and Safety and taxation treatments. Other areas that we are aware have been identified include the harmonization of the disability parking program and the companion card scheme. In arguing for standardisation of overarching legislation and regulation this needs to be in the context of free up streamlining and freeing resources to enable a greater focus on

personalization and customisation of service delivery.

No.3. Competitive tendering principles

Competitive tendering is resource intensive for organisations in the preparation of applications. The process requires the duplication of information that is already known in many cases by funding bodies. Competitive tendering is not an accurate indication of capacity to deliver quality services. If a service is demonstrating quality service delivery either through QA certification or performance then allocation processes need not be an onerous or costly exercise that reduces resources for service delivery.

In NSW, DADHC has introduced pre-qualification processes. The potential benefits of this are yet to be realized, however, is a positive step to reduce the resources that are applied to tendering. This process is seated alongside competitive tendering and direct allocation.

Competitive tendering can also disadvantage smaller organisations, the diversification of the sector, community development and innovation. Competitive tendering also serves as a counter indicator to collaboration and partnerships due to the competition for resources and organisations seeking to maintain their intellectual property. This is an inhibitor to sector initiatives, collaboration, information sharing and reduction of duplication. There is tremendous potential to increase innovation through collaboration and partnerships, to reduce program/policy silos and duplication

No.5. Consistent set of principles for funding agreements across all programs.

Consistency across jurisdictions and programs would improve the efficiency of the sector. In particular standard chart of accounts would be of use to enable greater comparison of like with like.

No.6 & 7. Cost of services

Governments are moving towards unit costs and a set price for the purchase of services. This approach leaves little room for negotiation on the true cost of support/services. This can result in underfunding across services and between different programs and we have seen evidence of this.

We are mindful of the need for efficiency and effectiveness, however, the funding level for services leaves little for increased service capacity and development. Appropriate funding and therefore the level of staff resources available to people with a disability, particularly in supported living, plays a critical role in terms of outcomes for individuals.

No. 16

There should be standardised criteria for input tax exemptions across jurisdictions.

No. 17

The exemption from Fringe Benefits tax is critical to enable organisations such as Ability Options to retain and appropriately remunerate a professional workforce. Awards governing the sector, such as the NSW Social and Community Services Award (SACS) offer poor rates of pay. This in particular needs to be improved to offer an appropriate level of remuneration, career development and to retain workers within the sector and appropriately value the work undertaken. The Workforce Capacity strategy is seeking to establish the disability sector as an 'industry of choice' by the end of 2010. This initiative is welcomed.

No. 23 – Individual funding for clients

Individual or case base funding options has been on the increase and should be made more widely available to individuals and their families. A move from block grants to greater individual funding has the potential to create viability issues for a sustainable and viable services sector that will need to be thought through. We advocate for mechanisms, such as personalised support and self management options that will increase individual and community capacity, choice, control, self determination and empowerment.

To date it is our experience that the cost of administering Individualised funding or self directed support is higher than administering block grants, without the cost of this being adequately taken into account.

A critical issue that is acknowledged at the State and National level is the extent of unmet need. A National Disability Insurance Scheme has the capacity to address this issue and we are supportive of

this notion being explored further.

No. 28 Pilot best practice programs

Pilot programs are of extreme benefit to test new service delivery models, ideas and initiatives. It is important that the outcome of pilot programs feed into ongoing program development. One example is the Aged Care Disability Aged Care Interface Pilot – Innovative Pool Funding. This three year pilot was ended and there continues to be a policy and service delivery gap in the area of ageing and disability.

Innovation or pilot funding is an excellent mechanism to trial new models of service delivery or approaches that focus on partnerships with individuals, families, service providers and governments.

Recommendations from the Senate Inquiry into disclosure regimes for charities and not for profit organisations.

The concept of an independent regulator for not-for-profit organisations would have some benefit. Including:

- A better understanding of the size and scope of the sector and its activities;
- The development of best practice standards; and
- Public education, community development and promoting public sector partnerships and the mechanism to achieve this.

The necessity of a single specialist mandatory legal structure is unclear. Additional details of an independent regulator are required to assess the benefits.

A standard chart of accounts for use by all departments and not-for-profit organisations was identified as a priority and we are supportive of this to improve efficiency across the sector and between government and not for profit organisations.

2/ Measuring the Contribution of the not for profit sector

Ability Options is able to calculate the direct contributions through the employment of staff and are able to identify the value of volunteers and pro bono support. We are currently engaging in the process of identifying other value add on contribution including social capital and community strengthening.

The organisation is currently exploring a triple bottom line reporting methodology. In particular we are seeking to be able to report and measure on our social contribution to the communities in which we operate. We are also interested in the contribution made by people with a disability (who we provide support to) to their local communities. Increasingly we are interested in the concept of community networks and development as a strategy to increase inclusion and integration and an increase in informal supports and networks. We are interested therefore in methods that will measure community networks and strength.

Organisations such as Ability Options exist for a specific purpose. In our case this is "to provide people with disabilities better opportunities that will enable them to enhance their lifestyles and achieve their goals". Ability Options contributes through:

- The direct delivery of services, case management and self management facilitation;
- Supporting people with a disability to develop skills to maximise their social, economic and civic participation;
- Facilitating social support and informal supports and networks;
- Networking and liaising with other community services, facilities and individuals; and
- Through community education and advocacy.

Ability Options is seeking to develop benchmarks of best practice to include a measurement of outcomes. As the Issues Paper identified, page 21, frameworks are mostly focused on the inputs and outputs of programs. Programs such as the Disability Employment Network are funded on a case based basis and measured on outcomes and successful work integration. In service delivery a greater focus on outcomes and methodologies to measure these are beneficial as the measure to achieve program objectives, as opposed to number of individuals supported and hours of service delivery per annum. A framework that focuses on outcomes and the broader community impacts in measuring the

contribution of the not for profit sector is valuable. The measurement of the latter would be difficult in dollar terms and is not an appropriate objective.

To gain a picture of the impact of the not-for profit sector a range of indicators, measures and methods should be used as no one single approach is likely to provide this information. A range of quantitative and qualitative data will be required to provide the evidence and information on the value and activities of the not for profit sector.

There is greater scope for collaboration and for practice evidence to feed into program and policy development. It is often the case that a top down approach to social policy is the norm with little scope for a bottom up approach.

In NSW there is a lack of specific evidence of need for services due to waiting lists and evidence not being centrally maintained. Anecdotally there is evidence from carers, including older carers of uncertainty and inability to plan for the future due to difficulties accessing services. COAG's move to improve the effectiveness of service delivery and quality of outcomes as part of the Disability Service Agreement is positive. We welcome other initiatives such as single access points to enable the community to more easily navigate the service system, better measurement of unmet need, population benchmarking for Disability Services; early intervention and prevention, lifelong planning and increasing independence and social participation strategies; more consistent access to aids and equipment, and increased access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

3/ Ways of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector

3.1. Human Resources

Ability Options has a voluntary Board of 12 Directors. The Board is comprised of people with a disability (including two people who receive services from the organisation) and professional business people. The organisation has a recruitment policy and procedure to ensure the Board is suitably skilled to oversee its governance responsibilities. Specific skills provided by lawyers, drafts people etc are utilised in some instances on a pro bono basis.

The organisation benefits from a committed Board of Directors. One of the founding members of the organisation continues on the Board and has served for 33 years and there are some other long standing members. This kind of commitment and knowledge is critical and we hope that we are able to continue to attract Board members with this level of commitment. There is no serving term for Board members. This is beneficial as it reduces uncertainty and stability in the governance of the organisation. New members are able to be included onto the Board, bringing different perspectives and skills and to enable the transfer of organisational knowledge.

Ability Options relies on the employment of paid personnel to provide direct support services. We are very interested in supporting the development of informal and social networks of support as noted earlier. The use of volunteers to provide direct support services is limited due to the training and accountability requirements.

In terms of paid workers, Ability Options is concerned about workforce shortages in the future. A significant barrier to the employment of skilled staff and their retention is the rates of remuneration that are payable. As noted the organisation relies on the Fringe Benefits Exemption to offer incentives to work within the sector.

An improvement in remuneration will assist with recognising the value of the work within the sector and the capacity to retain a professional workforce. However, we anticipate that without an improvement to awards rates (particularly the NSW SACS Award) the ability to attract staff in the future becomes uncertain. Staff are the organisations greatest resource to ensure the quality outcomes that the service expects and is contracted to provide.

Ability Options provides competency based training for staff, professional development and supervision. This is one strategy to retain an experienced workforce. Ability Options has a partnership with a registered training organisation to achieve its human resource objectives including the provision

of ongoing training and professional development to meet the objectives of the organisation and the needs of clients. Our dedicated human resource capacity seeks to maximise competency based training and professional development. We have initiated a manageability program. This is a five year program for staff development and training. It is achieving best practice in ongoing professional development, training and supervision. All supervisors in implementing this program have achieved units of competency towards a diploma or associate diploma in community services - through recognition of prior learning. Our supervisors are certified workplace trainers and assessors and provide direct assessment and training for all employees to ensure they are retaining competence. Through the supervision process our direct support staff are achieving competence in Certificate IV Disability Studies and there is an ongoing process of development. The outcomes of this process feed into an organisational skills matrix to identify new areas of training. Through this process we have identified specific training in aged care and mental health for staff.

3.2. Access to Financial Resources

Access to a quantity and diversity of financial resources increases economies of scale and potential capacity of organisations. Ability Options has for example, been able to dedicate resources to human resources/functions. This both improves the effectiveness of the organisation due to specialisation of this function and reduces risks.

The diversity of the organisations finances has also provided the organisation with a cash flow to enable the commencement of new services such as the Disability Employment Network. This has been critical to our capacity in this area due to no capital grants or establishment costs being made available for this program. Having a positive cash flow enables the organisation to be more effective in our operations, to achieve our objectives, program requirements and a level of flexibility in service delivery.

The funding for programs does not in all cases cover the cost of providing the service. Ability Options has subsidised the cost of new service initiatives and pilots as a commitment to innovation. This however is not always possible.

Ability Options does not currently engage in fundraising activities, despite having ITEC, PBI and DGR status. To do so would require the establishment of a dedicated resource for this activity.

In providing support services to a vulnerable section of the community and to adhere to funding requirements, a professional and consistent level of service delivery is required. Key drivers of efficiency and effectiveness within Ability Options include:

- 1/ a focus on our mission and maximizing resources to service delivery;
- 2/ keeping overhead/administration costs to a minimum; and
- 3/ a commitment to Quality Assurance and continuous improvement.

3.3. Capacity to innovate and use resources to best effect

Ability Options is proactive in seeking to support innovation and to learn from new directions and best practice internationally and across Australia. We have been able to implement innovative and best practice through this process across the service and to apply this to new service development opportunities.

The organisation has a proactive Board and will establish a Task Group in areas of new direction to include Board members and members of the management team and senior staff. The organisation has recently invested in a research position to support the organisation to achieve new directions in line with the current vision. However, the sector requires innovation grants and opportunities to engage in partnership research.

Ability Options maintains professional memberships with the following organisation:

- Australian Human Resources Institute
- Australasian Society for the Study of Intellectual Disability
- Centre for Disability Studies
- Interchange NSW

- NSW Council for Intellectual Disability
- NSW Council of Social Services
- National Disability Services
- Pathways Australia
- Physical Disability Council NSW
- ACE National – peak body for Disability Employment Network.

These organisations provide information, networking, conference and seminar opportunities amongst the not for profit and disability sector. There is good knowledge, collaboration and networking amongst these organisation and parts of the not for profit sector. However, as noted competitive tendering is a barrier to broader community collaborations and partnerships.

Ability Options is an advocate for greater collaboration and partnerships amongst organisations to support innovation and capacity to meet needs across program and policy areas. We are also supportive of greater links with research/academic institutions to better align research and practice and to inform evidenced based and bottom up policy making.

We have been participating in a PhD research study on end of life planning and are currently seeking partnership opportunities with Hammond care who provide aged care services.

Ability Options is currently seeking opportunities to upgrade the housing stock available to people with a disability. Our consultation processes have identified a number of key housing needs and programs. Through changes to the NSW housing regulations we are currently exploring partnerships with housing providers to achieve positive outcomes and access to appropriate housing for people with a disability.

The legislative and regulatory environment places significant accountability and practice requirements on disability service providers. Ability Options is supportive of the concept of a national regulatory reform agenda to reduced regulation differences across jurisdictions. Standardisation of regulation will potentially reduce costs and increase the capacity of organisations to respond to the differing needs of communities across Australia. However, we would want to see the details of this to ensure reforms will meet the identified objectives and to ensure that standardisation of overarching legislation and regulation is not a barrier but rather supports innovation.

It is our understanding that governments are moving to lead provider relationships. It is important to ensure that the not-for profit sector is comprised of a variety of organisations – small to large – to meet the different needs of the community. For some smaller organisations, there is pressure to reduce administrative overheads however the level of accountability and regulation means that this can be difficult to achieve. Having a diverse sector is important for innovation and meeting community need.

3.4. Advocacy

There are specific peak bodies and advocacy organisations operating in NSW and Nationally. They play an important role in advocating for specific needs within the community and it is important that they are able to undertake systemic advocacy.

Disability service organisations also play a role in terms of individual advocacy and community education. However, for organisations that rely on government funding the capacity to advocate becomes a risk in terms of the potential breakdown of relationships and risks to funding.

4. Service Delivery

Ability Options is an organisation that receives the majority of its funding to provide government contracted services. Block grants in advance, along with individual funding in advance enable a positive cash flow and therefore efficiency in the management of the operations of the organisation and service delivery.

The option to fund for profit providers for the delivery of services, such as DEN, appears to be at odds with maximizing tax payer dollars to provide essential services. The funding would appear to be better

utilised by not for profit organisations to increase resources to the community and those in need.

4.1. Funding arrangements

Competitive tendering processes are resource intensive as already noted. There is a tendency to favour larger organisations as a result. Competitive tendering has also coincided with a move from grant-base models and the acquittal of each contract for service. The move away from grant based models along with vacancy management developments has reduced the capacity for organisations to be flexible and responsive in relation to a number of programs, particularly where there was short-term capacity to provide services to those in need.

The acquittal process would be simplified if grants acquittals were streamlined. Current acquittal processes at the State level are complex and time consuming. Ability Options has been able to achieve some streamlining in this area over the last four years, however, additional streamlining would improve efficiency.

Current funding arrangements require service providers to provide individually responsive and flexible services within the program guidelines. Ability Options goes to great length to ensure an appropriate level of consultation, decision making and choice by those using the service. Personalised supports and self management increase the service responsiveness and increase choice and control. Ideally this should not be restricted to any one program to enable a choice of services/type of service to meet needs. This is likely to improve the efficiency of resources so that they are used where required.

A criticism of unproductive relationships between welfare organisations and governments could stem from the difficulty of services to meet needs due to the criteria in either contracts or funding guidelines. One example is the provision of respite services to children with a disability. In some cases families have asked if a sibling without a disability is able to receive in home respite at the same time. The guidelines in many cases have been interpreted as unable to provide this and therefore families are effectively left without the service or have to engage a separate carer.

It is extremely important that not for profit organisations and government work in partnership in the development of new programs, the management of risks and to engage the sector in policy development.

In NSW there has been the introduction of pre qualification schemes to determine eligibility to provide services over a four year period. This process sits alongside direct allocation and competitive tendering. It is hoped that processes will reduce the need to provide the same type of information continuously to funding bodies, particularly when the service and its activities are known to the funders.

4.2. Contract requirements

Three year funding agreements are mainly in place for services provided by Ability Options and provide an appropriate level of certainty and capacity for forward planning. There are high administrative burdens relating to government contracts and accountability.

The contractual obligations in some cases do inhibit flexibility and innovation due to the way that program funding is structured, as noted above.

Ability Options has in place a range of consultation processes to ensure that those receiving the service are the drivers of this and are supported in decision making and choice. Within self management (as it is) there needs to be mechanisms to address the risk of individuals/families as employers as this risk is currently born by organisations without adequate funding to manage the risks.

A National Disability Insurance Scheme will increase self management options for people with a disability and their families. A National Self Management Model for the management of funds such as is in place with the Victorian Transport and Accident Commission which is the financial intermediary would be worth exploring.

4.3. Specific Service Delivery Issues

As noted in the Issues paper p. 38, not for profit service providers are increasingly responding to complex needs. For people with a disability this includes those with a dual diagnosis (mental health), young people leaving care and those from the criminal justice system who have complex needs through trauma or abuse, individuals with complex health and medical needs and those with challenging behaviour. Organisations are increasingly required to develop service responses and models to meet complex needs and to develop specialist resources, training and approaches to meeting specific needs. For example Ability Options has created some specialisation in the area of disability and mental health to provide effective service delivery options for individuals who have not been able to be effectively serviced through mental health. There continues however to be a huge gap in this area and issues of whether and individuals is eligible for mental health service or disability services can deny access to services. In the context of complex needs partnerships and collaborations across program types are critical to effectively responding to individual needs and the development of appropriate service delivery models.

Ability Options is also seeking solutions to address the needs of people with a disability who are ageing and to prevent premature admission into residential aged care.