

8 July 2024

Getting the NDIS back on Track

My brother has an Acquired Brain Injury from a school bus accident when he was just 14 years old. He has lived with severe epilepsy (seizures every day) from the ABI since the accident in 1977. In 2010 he had further brain surgery to correct the epilepsy. He walked into the hospital for the surgery and came out of the hospital 13 months later in a wheelchair with left side paralysis, odema, side effects including psychosis and is now unable to walk, shower or toilet himself. He still suffers seizures. His level of disability is increasing as he ages. He is now 60 and is cared for in Supported Disability Accommodation. He requires 24 hour support, 7 days a week.

lived for 10 years in a SIL with 6 others. We moved him out of there because; he had little privacy; he had to listen to constant screaming and yelling from other participants; he was often made to wait long periods of time before being helped to the toilet because of lack of staff; he often sat all day without talking to anyone; he was seldom taken on outings; he was not encouraged to move or improve his mobility; he was put to bed by 7pm to get him out of the way; he was diagnosed with depression; his conditions grew worse because of lack of continuity with medical practitioners, occupational therapists and physiotherapy. He moved to a rented private SDA 2 years ago with one other participant and he is finally SMILING.

I am concerned that changes to the NDIS are already forcing back into a group SIL.

In July 2023 his NDIS funding was reduced even though his needs were increasing as he aged. His current level of funding cannot support him to stay in his new home. If he goes back to a group home he will be neglected and stressed, and his psychosis, depression and epileptic seizures will increase. I'm sure he would prefer to die. The NDIS has stipulated hourly rates for support workers but has not given enough funds to pay his carers for a full 12 months.

The NDIS has immensely improved his quality of life but now I see a real danger with the proposal to force people needing 24/7 support into group homes of 3 or more. has experienced it already and it wasn't fair.

There is a problem with the range of payments for support workers. For too many years support workers were paid minimum wages. The recent increase in hourly rates is fair and just. I have noticed a higher calibre of support workers entering the profession since the increase and that has been fantastic for . However, I believe the per hour payment starting at \$67 for support workers and ranging up to around \$120 for weekends and more for public holidays should only be for clients with high and complex needs and more importantly these support workers should not be expected to care for 3 people with complex needs at the same time.

Support workers are being paid the same to accompany a person with a mild disability to the cinema as they are to care for someone who requires assistance with personal hygiene and is confined to a wheelchair but needs to be transported via bus and fed lunch on the way to the doctor. If you have ever cared for someone with complex disabilities you will know it is very different to providing company for someone able bodied to go to the shops. If you have not experienced caring for someone with complex needs then perhaps you should give it a go. It is hard manipulating a wheelchair containing a 90kg grown man over gutters, finding a clean toilet with disability access and impossible to get them on a bus!

I believe there needs to be a range of payments that depend on the complexity of care. This would reduce the funds in plans for some participants and enable an increase for those participants with complex needs.

What is happening right now?

1. Per hour payments for support workers are set by NDIS and NDIS is paying support workers the same, no matter how complex the level of care.
2. NDIS has not provided enough funding to pay the support workers. NDIS is not paying enough into the plans of people requiring 24/7 supports. If my brother has to pay his support workers at least \$11,000 per week then he needs at least \$572,000 for 52 weeks. This year he received \$429,011.63. Sadly, his disability does not magically go away for 12 weeks each year!

did not stipulate these hourly rates- the NDIS did but now the NDIS are not giving him enough funds to pay his carers the award they deserve.

Yours Sincerely,