

Here at the Nerang Neighbourhood Centre on the Gold Coast we deal with people in crisis every day. We get on average 25+ enquiries a day across all of our programs/services. Approximately 50% of them are from New Zealand migrants whom have found themselves in crisis and restricted to (various) supports due to their residency status. In the last 3 months we have seen a notable increase in enquiries from long term New Zealand migrants unable to access NDIS to get necessary disability supports. Today alone, I have had three calls from parents whose pre-school children have been diagnosed with a disability and are unable to access necessary and essential early interventions via NDIS because they are not Permanent Residents.

The last call I had was from a couple who migrated here in 2004. They have both been working since they migrated here, they own their own home, and their 4 year old son (whom was born here) has recently been diagnosed with Autism. They are so stressed from struggling to self-fund the necessary care interventions and supports needed for their 4 year old just to get through the day to day things! Their paediatrician had come up with a plan for their son, including where to go to get what treatment, and they were ineligible for funding support for each and every aspect of the plan! Their paediatrician didn't have an understanding (either) that their Australian born son would not be eligible for funding for these supports. This same couple do meet the criteria for a skilled permanent visa. They have very real fears their visa application will be declined due to their son's Autism diagnosis, as many (publicized) applications have been, and that such valuable application money (\$5k) should be used for treatment for their son instead.

Our local NDIS provider here on the Gold Coast, Carers QLD, refer all of their enquiries from New Zealand citizens to us because they are not able to offer these people anything under NDIS. I have had 10 calls regarding ineligibility to NDIS since this time last week. The local information and supports we can provide are merely 'band aids' and will never meet the needs of these people and families.

It is my **submission** that NDIS eligibility be extended to include New Zealand migrants (Special Category Visa holders) who fall into the following categories;

- ALL New Zealand citizens who were in the country and paying taxes, therefore paying into the scheme, from the date of their specific State roll out **OR**
- ALL New Zealand citizens who have lived here for 10 consecutive years **AND**
- ALL children born in Australia to New Zealand citizens **OR**
- ALL children born in Australia to New Zealand citizens that have lived here for 10 consecutive years

I have (reluctantly) included a 10 year caveat option to keep in line with other entitlements afforded to long term New Zealand migrants by the Australian government, which include;

- access to a one off Centrelink benefit after living here for 10 consecutive years
- Australian citizenship after being born here and living here for 10 consecutive years
- access (for some) to HECS after living here for 10 consecutive years

The first 7 years for any child, let alone a child with a disability, is developmentally crucial!! All the research shows it!! Not one New Zealand citizen came to Australia to purposely give birth to a child with a disability and not one person purposely chose to conceive a child with a disability. Families in this extremely stressful predicament should be able to access a scheme they are paying into for this very purpose. It is simply unfair to be paying into a scheme you cannot access. New Zealand migrants present in Australia at the time of roll out have started paying for NDIS at the same time as every other tax payer so they should be able to access it.