

Ian F Dalwood

DATE: 24th January 2013

TO: Senate Submission re. NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS)

I wish to make a Submission to the Committee being a person with a disability, (Polio 1953). I am now sixty years of age having qualified as a Social Worker at Sydney University. Having worked for the Commonwealth and State Government, NGO's and the Private Sector I think I have the potential to contribute. I have also worked with Local Government for the last twenty years, (Bega Valley Shire - NSW) with its "Access Committee" as Chair. My wife and I live in our community like anyone else, I get about in power wheelchair. I receive a DSP (Disability Support Pension) and my wife "Carers"(sic). Despite the severity of my disability I use surprisingly few Services.

Services I currently use:-

#### PERSONAL CARE

When it became necessary four years ago to start using a Hoist to transfer me in and out of bed from my wheelchair, I took the initiative and started The Home Care Service of NSW. Home Care Staff come three times a week for personal care, two hours on each occasion

#### PERSONAL TRANSPORT

Although we have our own wheelchair van (*given* to us by a very generous friend) there are times when I need to go to town on my own. I use the local Taxi's wheelchair van as my past experiences with Community Transport means I'd prefer to pay a little more, (with the NSW Transport Taxi Subsidy Scheme - half fare) and have a continuity of Drivers, the flexibility of times for pick - up and return, the professionalism of the Taxi Drivers, (as opposed to volunteers) and Drivers who *know* how to lock my wheelchair down in a reasonable amount of time.

#### EQUIPMENT

Personally I don't believe the supply of equipment to people with disabilities under "ENABLE" in NSW is any better than it was three years ago when it was administered through Hospitals and Community Health Centres. I have two outstanding disputes from the second half of 2012 over a mattress (\$1150.00) and a replacement Control Box for my electric bed (\$1541.00). At four (4) years old ENABLE says my bed is too old to repair. (Mind you my mother paid for the bed at \$3500.00).

I hope NDIS will offer a fairer and more efficient dispute - resolution mechanisms than currently exists in Quangos such as (Dis)ENABLE.

## RESPITE

My wife has not had a break from looking after me for two years. The only Provider suited to my needs, (Bega valley Respite - Merimbula) was 'weighed in the balances and found wanting'). The lead - up to the Respite was so fraught with difficulties that I had to withdraw from the process - it could only get worse. Unfortunately this Provider is the ONLY suitable provider in the Bega Vally Shire. I have no choice of Provider.

IF I had my own budget for RESPITE I could:

Choose my own venue

Choose a Provider or a combination of Providers eg. Merimbula Home Nursing + the Community Agency attached to Hillgrove House at Bega

Choose the length of the Respite, eg. eight nights (which was previously refused).

## PHYSIOTHERAPY

We pay a Physio Therapist to come to our home every other week. Why? Bega Hospital does not provide community Physio. Even if I attended the Hospital Physio Department I would only be eligible for six (6) weeks Physio. My needs are ongoing.

## OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

It appears the local Occupational Therapists (OT's) are run - off their feet with community work and trying to meet the insatiable needs of ENABLE for Assessments, Write - Ups, Recommendations, Ordering and follow - up. There are times when it would appear ENABLE employs the Community Health OT's directly. NDIS needs to ensure this onerous process is not repeated.

## IPTAAS

Most people will be unaware of this Scheme in NSW, (good luck to you), IPTAAS stands for "Isolated Patient Transport Assistance and Accommodation Scheme". IPTAAS has a dreadful and complicated amount of paperwork for both Doctor (GP and Specialist). If a Scheme to help offset the cost of transport and accommodation tosse Medical Specialists was to be measured by the participation of the Aboriginal Community, IPTAAS would fold tomorrow. And IPTAAS can take anything from 4 - 6 months to pay the Patient. Some Patients will die before their Application is sorted. If NDIS can offer a substitute only time will tell.

## EMPLOYMENT

An odd issue to raise in relation to NDIS?

Scrolling through the Legislation I did not see anything about the **employment of people with disabilities** in the setting - up of NDIS.

Recently a Government Minister said that the best thing that could be done for Single Parents was, "To get them a job".

So too with people having a disability, all the DSP affords only poverty and debt.

One doesn't have to be a Bill Shorten to know the barriers to employment:-

Prejudice in every Sector of Employment

The low expectations of people with disabilities, perhaps from past experiences

The significant and additional costs of travelling to and from work, (a School friend who has since died spent *the bulk* of his wages on taxis to get to and from work - able bodied employees would not countenance such a situation for the *privilege* of working).

Competing with Managers for precious on - site parking, promised at Interview but refused in practice - yes this was once my experience.

Employment of People with Disabilities in NDIS

Can you imagine a bureaucracy set - up to attempt to address the Rights and Issues facing the Aboriginal Nation NOT employing people of Aboriginal Descent? No.

Similarly a bureaucracy to address the Rights and Issues facing Women NOT employing women? No.

But it happens with disability and no one blinks an eye lid. Another Schoolfriend who died fairly recently worked for the State Department Community Services. He said to me that by his reckoning that he could count on the fingers of one hand, (or less) the number of people with disabilities employed in that Department. When "Disability" is part of the Department's Charter the question has to be asked - "Why so few employees with disabilities".

Similarly the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS) could employ more employees with disabilities than it currently does. An ironic example of access in physical terms at least, the current premises housing CRS in Bega NSW are only accessible by vehicle. The driveway is impassable to a person in a push/manual wheelchair and I wouldn't attempt the gradient in my power wheelchair. So much for able - bodied insights.

And yet a argument that might be put forward in terms of employing people with a disability might be that they are "biased". I feel sure that *worry* can be dealt with!

Similarly, in Bega "Campbell Page"/Employment has steps into its main entrance. A little further along Campbell Page's windows on Carp Street there's a locked door to a ramped entrance, the sign on this door says; "Use Other Door" ...

With EMPLOYMENT I am not suggesting people with disabilities be employed over others. However much more could be done to encourage people with a disability to apply eg.

In advertisements, "Applications from people with disabilities welcome".

"Interviews for this Position will be held at accessible venue". (I've always telephoned ahead to check this")

"This workplace meets the Standards necessary for people with disabilities to make their way throughout our offices and the Staff Kitchen".

Unless something gives, and gives soon regarding people with disabilities and work then the idea of "Quotas" or "Positive Discrimination" may be necessary. It is likely that such steps are needed now, but no - one is ready for it.

The NDIS Administration is an ideal opportunity to integrate its workforce from the outset with both able - bodied workers and people with disability alike.

OVER 65's

Some thought will need to given to participants attaining the age of sixty - five and what it will mean for them in a non - NDIS life that is, assisted transition.

SUMMARY

I've drawn a lot on my own experiences over the years and by so doing have described 'what is' rather than what "could be" with the advent of NDIS. I hope the submission is helpful in some small way.

If you require a signature please let me have a Facsimile Number or Address and I shall send it on. I Registered on the Website.

Thank - you,

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PS If NDIS wished to be successfully set - up in Communities, it will need to have a six week turnaround when it comes to paying its creditors, eg. Rent, Therapists etc, otherwise NDIS' "street cred" will be undermined. I say this from my experience in setting - up Bega's first CRS Office (NSW).