

# National Disability Insurance Scheme

**A response by Cootharinga North  
Queensland to the Inquiry into the  
National Disability Insurance Scheme,  
Townsville, Queensland  
Hearing Date: 29 January 2013**

This document has been prepared by Cootharinga North Queensland. It contains a summary of a series of opportunities and challenges that Cootharinga believes will arise during the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

We have grouped our responses relating to the issues in the following areas:

- issues for individuals and families
- issues for the community
- issues for workforce
- issues for organisations

We congratulate the Senate, the Australian Parliament and all members for the courage and speed with which they embraced the report of the Productivity Commission on the introduction of the NDIS. Australians can be proud of their political representatives who have shown leadership and compassion over this important national issue – a fairer go for Australians with a disability.

Cootharinga welcomes additional questions in writing after the time of the Hearing, should the Committee or Committee Chair wish to seek clarification from us.

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President  
Board of Directors

Brendan Walsh  
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## 1. ISSUES FOR INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES

Issue	Opportunities	Challenges
Self Direction, choice and control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choice and flexibility for individuals and families</li> <li>individuals can have choice over the of level of management they undertake for their funding and services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to prepare and support individuals and families to be ready for self direction</li> <li>Urgent responses need to be available</li> <li>unpaid effort of agencies that will have to offer guidance to individuals managing their own funding</li> <li>Added stress on people and carers already under pressure, including financial responsibilities</li> <li>People with impaired capacity: will their 'package' cover the real cost of paid guardians</li> <li>Will funding levels meet the true needs of people with multiple and complex needs</li> </ul>
People from diverse backgrounds (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culturally sensitive and locally based solutions can be developed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We believe additional support is needed to ensure appropriate access by individuals with disability and their carers from these groups.</li> <li>Local Area Coordination has proven to be an important vehicle to promote access to services by individuals or groups who have traditionally been under-represented in the use of available and funded services (by governments, and also not-for-profits).</li> </ul>
Screening and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>opportunity to develop a single point of entry, with straightforward processes and assessment tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service recipients will be subjected to invasive assessments that will accord higher resources to those who are prepared to share more intimate details of their struggles to cope.</li> <li>We have concern that prescriptive screening and assessment tools will be imposed that do not adequately meet the information needs of service providers.</li> <li>Information collected by assessors should be passed on in total, and preferably via electronic referrals</li> </ul>

## 2. ISSUES FOR THE COMMUNITY

Issue	Opportunities	Challenges
Social Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creative choices supported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resourcing for ongoing service innovation is not adequately factored into the proposed NDIS</li> <li>Community inclusion work to be supported and funded, alongside individualised funding for support and equipment. Some people may choose community inclusion support but there is a role for fostering community-wide change about community inclusion of people with disability.</li> <li>Potential pressure for organisations to have to fundraise for innovative developments and service enhancements</li> </ul>
Regional, rural and remote issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities for local and practical solutions to flourish</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consistently delivering high quality and up-to-date services and practices</li> <li>absence of suitably skilled workforce</li> <li>implications for travel costs for staff and equipment deliveries</li> </ul>

### 3. ISSUES FOR THE WORKFORCE

Issue	Opportunities	Challenges
Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased funding to the sector will lead to stronger career paths</li> <li>need for workforce accreditation / registration</li> <li>Greater choice by individual and families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dramatic increase needed in numbers of staff</li> <li>Challenge of retaining appropriate talented and skilled staff, especially with the expected increase in use of casual staff within the workforce</li> <li>Challenges and costs of skilling up staff in a fluid employment market. This is especially challenging and costly in regional, rural and remote communities.</li> </ul>
Accreditation, regulation of workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ability to promote skills development and professional standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>need to protect vulnerable individuals from staff that should not be working in this area.</li> <li>system for regulation / accreditation should be simple, decisive, yet allow flexibility (for example in urgent situations, or in remote areas).</li> </ul>

### 4. ISSUES FOR ORGANISATIONS

Issue	Opportunities	Challenges
Need to re-orient some organisations to focus on individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity for positive, flexible and inclusive culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change management challenges including supporting staff to embrace change</li> </ul>
Individual funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Massive increase in funding complexity and administrative costs</li> <li>Grave concerns over the inefficient FOFMS being selected as the NDIS finance system. Need for interface for electronic data input, not manually entered transactions</li> </ul>
Marketing orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the strengths of the organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff and managers need to become ambassadors/marketers for the organisation</li> <li>Existing financial supporters and sponsors may drift away as funding increases under NDIS</li> </ul>
Market forces and structural changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consolidation of smaller agencies could yield efficiencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased competition from interstate/overseas organisations, including private businesses</li> <li>lack of certainty over the potential impact of not-for-profit reforms already underway (including Australia Charities and Nonprofits Commission)</li> <li>major governance challenges are expected to arise as Boards and Directors prepare for, and respond to dramatic changes in the operating environments of their organisations</li> </ul>