

Joint Standing Committee Inquiry into the NDIS Assistive Technology

Additional information

Further to the initial submission and provision of evidence provided by Limbs 4 Life to the Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Assistive Technology Inquiry at the Public Hearing Friday 19 October, 2018, please find additional information below.

There was comment made that the number of people living with limb loss in Australia was far less than other physical disabilities. Please see below a table outlining the number of amputations per year and the age groups represented by this data in relation to other physical disabilities.

1. Comparison of physical disabilities in Australia:

Rates and number of lower limb amputations compared to other physical disabilities

The number of amputees in Australia is increasing dramatically each year. Indeed the number of people experiencing limb loss far outweighs the number of people in any other single physical disability category. With timely and appropriate support from the NDIS, the vast majority of these individuals will go on to live a healthy and productive life contributing to the Australian community both socially and economically. Table 1 provides an indication of the scale of amputations that occur each year compared to the incidence of other physical disability types.

Table 1: Comparative numbers by physical disability type

Disability	Rates/Numbers
Amputations	Approximately 9,000 amputations per year ¹ (Approximately 40% of these are people under the age of 60 years)
Cerebral palsy	Approximately 584 per year
Multiple Sclerosis	Approximately 520 per year
Spinal Cord Injury	Approximately 378 new cases each year ²

2. Incidence of children and adolescent prosthetic users – Queensland

The Committee requested information about the number of children and adolescent prosthetic users in Australia. Unfortunately this information is not centrally collected and is difficult to obtain. The most recent national data was collected in 2001.

Table 2 provides an example of recent statistics. The data was collected by the Queensland Artificial Limb Service (QALS – Queensland Health) and outlines the number of children and adolescent prosthetic users in Queensland.

¹ Data source - Dillion MP, Fortington LV, Akram M Erbas B, Kohler F (2017) Geographic Variation of the Incidence Rate of Lower Limb Amputation in Australia from 2007 -12, PLoS ONE 12(1): e0170705. Doc: 10.1371/journal.pone. 0170705

² Data source - <https://scia.org.au/living-with-a-disability/resources/statistics/>

Table 2: Number of Children and adolescent prosthetic users (Queensland).

People under the age of 18 years, using a prosthetic device make up 4 per cent of the state total of prosthetic users.

Active Clients	2018-19	% of Total	2017-18	% of Total	2016-17	% of Total	2015-16	% of Total	2014-15	% of Total
Child - Under 18yrs	117	4%	126	4%	130	4%	139	4%	136	4%
Adult - 18-64 yrs	1448	51%	1594	53%	1818	55%	1909	52%	1847	52%
Aged - 65yrs over	1299	45%	1309	43%	1375	41%	1461	44%	1426	44%
QALS Active Clients	2865	100%	3029	100%	3323	100%	3509	100%	3409	100%
Female	602	21%	644	21%	717	22%	572	33%	548	21%
Male Clients	2263	79%	2386	79%	2606	78%	2142	67%	2092	79%

Data provided by the Queensland Artificial Limb Service (QALS – 2018)

Service provision for children and adolescents in Queensland

- Children and adolescents need a new prosthesis every 9 to 14 months, hence the average of 12 months expected period of use – a new prosthesis every year.
- Foot units are generally outgrown before they wear out until they reach a ‘foot size’ limit usually in their late teens.
- Knee units, if chosen correctly by the prosthetic provider, for the child can be reused over several years.
- The higher end knee units are expected to provide at least 2 – 3 years of use if funded for adolescents.

3. Prosthetic treatment and outcomes for people with lower limb loss due to Type 2 diabetes / vascular disease

Research confirms that the majority of people who experience limb loss as a result of diabetes, are able to regain their mobility with the aid of appropriate prosthesis³. Indeed a study conducted by (VA Medical Center, Puget Sound and Denver), a university hospital (University of Colorado Medical Center, Denver), tracked mobility outcomes following amputations due to diabetes and vascular disease. Pre amputation, post rehabilitation and 12 months post and found that those under the age of 65 years regained pre-morbid mobility within 12 months of their amputation.

Furthermore, several researchers argue that reports on morbidity relating to older amputees are often misconstrued, particularly those suggesting that death occurred as a result of diabetes, when in fact death more often occurs due to a systemic disease. The only exception to this is found in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations where the average age for diabetic related amputations is 20 years younger than for other Australians.

³ Data source <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0741521411002072>