



4 August 2006

The Secretary  
Senate Community Affairs References Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir

**INQUIRY INTO THE FUNDING AND OPERATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH STATE/TERRITORY DISABILITY AGREEMENT**

I write to make a submission to the above inquiry particularly in relation to Terms of Reference (c) *an examination of the ageing/disability interface with respect to health, aged care and other services, including the problems of jurisdictional overlap and inefficiency.*

Aged and Community Services Australia (ACSA) is the leading national peak body for aged and community care providers and represents over 1,200 church, charitable and community-based organisations providing housing and supported accommodation, residential and community care services to around half a million older people, younger people with a disability and their carers.

The population of people with lifelong disabilities is ageing. Historically it was rare for people with lifelong disabilities to reach old age, but now it is increasingly common. People age at different rates and some disabilities – such as Down Syndrome and Cerebral Palsy – are associated with premature ageing. The needs that arise from ageing do not displace the needs that arise from a lifelong disability: they are in addition.

People who are ageing with a disability often require access to both disability and aged care services. While disability services are generally not equipped to manage the conditions and symptoms of ageing, aged care services are generally not able to meet specific disability support needs. There is a need for stronger links between these different services to meet this growing need.

The two service systems are trying to address these issues to ensure that policy, practice and services support meet the individual needs of people with a disability who are ageing and their ageing carers. This is made difficult by artificial and rigid program boundaries and inadequate funding.

ACSA believes that much can be done to improve the care and support of people with disabilities who are ageing. One positive way forward was the innovative pool projects funded by the Department of Health & Ageing in 2002 -2003. These projects combined Commonwealth aged care funds with State disability services funds and created services which aimed to prevent the inappropriate admission of younger people with disabilities into residential aged care facilities.

The Australian Institute of Health & Welfare has undertaken an evaluation of these services and, while the report has not yet been published, it is understood that the findings were generally positive. This principle of blended funding, enabling services and support for those care needs related to disability and those to ageing, needs to be able to be applied throughout the system.

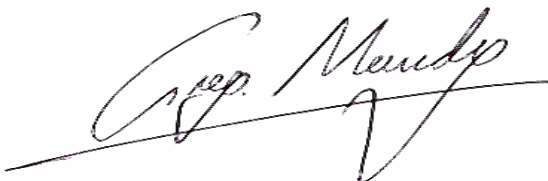
However, the Department of Health & Ageing, while committing to continued funding for existing clients, will not continue the program or make these services available as a mainstream, rather than pilot, program. The main issue appears to be the need to determine which supports are required as a result of the disability a person may have and which, and how much, relate to the persons ageing. This is a prime example of concerns about cost shifting between jurisdictions getting in the way of effective service delivery to clients. A practical way of determining, or approximating, this needs to be developed or it will be used as a reason for not being able to combine funds and create service responses which genuinely meet the needs of this population.

The CSTDA needs to lead a process of addressing this issue for the disability sector. Negotiation with the Department of Health & Ageing is critical if this is to become reality.

ACROD, Aged & Community Services Australia (ACSA), Carers Australia, COTA National Seniors and the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations – the Ageing & Disability Alliance- have joined forces to promote, and seek solutions to, the issues facing people with disabilities who are ageing and their carers. I have attached a copy of the policy statement “*Working Together – Policy on Ageing & Disability*” as it outlines the issues, what services could look like in the future and makes a series of recommendations that would improve the care of people with disabilities who are ageing. These recommendations need to be considered and addressed. The CSTDA is an ideal vehicle to advance this work.

If you have any queries or require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me on (03) 9686 3460.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Mundy', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

**GREG MUNDY**  
**Chief Executive Officer**