



Developmental Disability Council of WA  
*Working for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities*

**Submission to the Senate Community Affairs  
References Committee**

**Inquiry into the Funding and Operation  
of the Commonwealth State/Territory  
Disability Agreement**

August 2006

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## INTRODUCTION

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This submission by the Developmental Disability Council of WA (DDC) places before the Senate Community Affairs References Committee issues and concerns relating to the funding and operation of the Commonwealth States and Territories Disability Agreement (CSTDA).

DDC is a not for profit, community organisation providing a strong voice for people with developmental disability, their families and the organisations that work for them. DDC works to promote and safeguard the rights of people with developmental disability and to ensure they are provided the supports and services they need.

DDC is the WA State Agency member for the National Council on Intellectual Disability (NCID), the national association representing people with intellectual disability and their families in Australia.

We believe the CSTDA is critical in ensuring a system for the provision of much needed services and supports to people with disability across Australia.

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## SUBMISSION

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According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), in 2003, people with disability constituted 20% of Australia's population.<sup>1</sup> Statistics alone suggest that disability is a significant issue that must be addressed appropriately and adequately by Australia's governments. More importantly though, disability is not just an issue, disability is about people. Australia is judged not on its rhetoric but its action. It is judged by how it provides for all its citizens, not just some.

People with disability and their families have the right to a fair go and a good life equitable to all other citizens of Australia. They have the right to be treated with respect and dignity and the right to be provided with the supports and services required to live a life comparable to other citizens of Australia.

People with disability have the right to good health, education, employment and accommodation – and any other supports and services required to live a good life. This is no different to the rights of nor the needs of everyone else. These rights also indicate that disability cannot be dealt with in isolation. People with disability require services that cross government departmental divisions and they require different services at different stages of their lives.

People with disability also have different needs according to the limitations or restrictions of their disability. People with physical, sensory, cognitive, psychiatric and intellectual disability all have differing needs and cannot be treated as a homogenous group of people.

People with disability receive support and assistance both informally through family and friends, and formally through government, non-government service providers and commercial organisations. The vast majority of support is provided by family and friends. For example, according to the ABS, in Western Australia, 87% of people with disability receive assistance informally through family and friends and 60% receive formal assistance. These formal services are not sought after lightly. They are services needed, in many cases to prevent the breakdown of families.

The CSTDA is a critical vehicle for the provision of these formal supports and services. DDC supports the submission, in its entirety, to the Senate Committee by the Disability Coalition WA

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics survey, *Disability Ageing and Carers* 2003.

comprising the WA disability sector's peak, network and representative bodies (these include ACROD(WA), Carers WA, CASA (Committed About Securing Accommodation), DDC, Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre, Headwest and People with Disabilities (WA)).

DDC wishes, however, to emphasise some key points pertinent to a CSTDA which would best provide for people with disability and their families.

### **Unmet Need**

The unmet need for essential support services for people with disability is a national crisis. The support services required are those any human being would need to survive and live a dignified life. In a country which prides itself on a "fair go" for all and is blessed with wealth and good fortune, no one in the community would deny the provision of support services to people in need.

The unmet need is for supports to enable people to live independently in their own homes; services which provide people with employment and assistance in preparing for and finding employment; support for a meaningful day activity and for personal and social development; therapy to support people to live the best quality of life possible; and essential respite for families caring for a family member with a disability.

In all jurisdictions current levels of unmet need reflect chronic under-investment by successive governments in supports and services required to meet the needs of people with disability. This under-investment comes at an unacceptable human cost as well as an undesirable financial cost to government through the loss of people with disability, families and carers participating in the workforce and contributing to the community as well as the adverse impact on their health and well being.

**DDC recommends that the next CSTDA includes:**

- **A joint commitment by both Commonwealth and State/Territory governments to resolving unmet need for support services.**
- **An obligation to provide adequate and effective data to identify and monitor unmet need.**
- **A provision for the Commonwealth and State/Territory governments to work in co-operation and partnership in developing a comprehensive plan to address the identified unmet need.**

### **Future Funding & Services**

Population changes in Australia are predictable and will be reflected in growing demand for disability services. Together with addressing the unmet need, we need to plan for adequate services into the future. Current levels of service are not sufficient to meet current need let alone increased need in the future.

The current CSTDA does not provide an explicit commitment to increased funding to meet increased demand nor does it provide a comprehensive and strategic approach to ensuring an adequate, responsive and comprehensive disability service system.

The current CSTDA also does not contain the specific data requirements found in the first CSTDA 1991. The data requirements of the first CSTDA were directed to three key areas:

1. effectively planning for future service provision (ie, type and level of disability, location of service, type of service);
2. unmet needs data to assist in planning for future service provision; and

3. evaluation data to provide an indication of effectiveness of service provision.

The planning and provision of services into the future must have a whole-of-life focus. For many people with disability, the services they require at different identifiable stages of life can be predicted and planned for. Not only would this provide for a workable, efficient and effective service provision system but it would also provide people with confidence that supports and services will be available when they are required.

**DDC recommends that the next CSTDA includes:**

- **an obligation to provide adequate and effective data to enable proper planning for future service provision.**
- **a comprehensive national framework to provide supports and services into the future and with a whole-of-life focus.**
- **focus on outcomes, not outputs; and, meeting the individual needs of people with disability and their families.**

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