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

Dear Committee Secretary

**Inquiry into Planning Options and Services
for People Ageing with a Disability**

I welcome the invitation to provide a submission to the Committee and I offer the following comments in relation to the Terms of Reference.

- **Access to planning options and services for people with a disability to ensure their continued quality of life as they and their carers age, and**
- **To identify any inadequacies in the choice and funding of planning options currently available to people ageing with a disability and their carers.**

In the first instance, I highlight concerns from Aged & Community Services, SA & NT which are relevant to people ageing with a disability:

- The interface between ageing, chronic disease, mental health, dementia and palliative care;
- The cross-cultural relationship between ageing, Indigenous issues and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- The difficulty the aged care sector has had in attracting and retaining all levels of staff. Measures to counteract this must be evaluated;
- The heightened expectations for older people to remain in their own homes due to the expansion of community services as a major service system which have increased pressure on service providers to supply quality assistance to meet that demand;
- The need for initiatives that would improve communications, share information and reduce complexity between the aged care sector, general practice, acute care and the community;
- The need of carers' health program, including health checks through GPs and training in such areas as nutrition, health care management and injury minimisation, to help sustain carers in their essential role.

In light of the above, I would advocate support for people ageing with a disability but with the caveat that the support needs to be sensible, realistic and cost effective. I cite the expense of disability friendly buses and bus stops which very few disabled people use. At least in Adelaide, some of the funds spent on equipping buses, trains and trams could have been better spent on targeted transport routes and residential accommodation and services for people with a disability. I would also argue that such facilities/services should not be structured in the context of Melbourne or Sydney alone, but rather be tailored according to local needs and circumstances across Australia.

I reiterate my main point and urge that future options and services be useful and realistic, ie cost-effective and meet anticipated demand. For that reason I commend the recent policy decision by the Victorian Government to introduce direct funding access to disabled people and their families to provide more flexible care services and individualised funding packages. This will enable them to spend government entitlements as they see fit and in accordance with their individual needs. Allowing disabled people to engage their own support staff and influence service design to meet their own needs must afford a greater sense of confidence and self-esteem, be of immense benefit to the individual, and be seen as a fairer method of providing assistance.

The associated, although small scale, project *Personalised Lifestyle Assistance*, which is funded by a non-recurrent grant from the Department of Human Services Victoria, is aimed at creating services and support for a small number of people with a disability and their families that are designed and governed by the people who use them. The project's goal is for **all** people to have the opportunity for a 'lifestyle that is personally meaningful, relevant and typically intertwined in the community'. Such an objective is essential not only for those ageing with a disability but also for disabled people of all ages.

I am aware of recent tragic deaths of people with disabilities caused by their own family members that highlight the urgent need for additional support and respite care. Carers carry a huge physical and emotional load which will only intensify as they, and those for whom they care, increase in age. I would support funding to establish additional respite care and support accommodation where it is badly needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Bob Such MP JP
Member for Fisher