

## **Understanding the Draft Productivity Commission Report into Disability and Care and Support**

The Productivity Commission has accepted that the disability system is not meeting the needs of people with a disability, their families and carers or indeed the needs of the nation and has recommended a complete overhaul. The opening words of the draft report say it all – “the disability support system overall is inequitable, underfunded, fragmented and inefficient and gives people with a disability little choice.”

The Commission is proposing two schemes. The larger National Disability Insurance Scheme will provide support to approx 360,000 people whose disability has a significant impact on their daily life.

A second smaller scheme -the National Injury Insurance Scheme - would provide support for people who suffer a catastrophic injury and would be based on widening and strengthening existing state-based schemes.

A person getting support from the NDIS would need to have a permanent disability and meet one of the following conditions:

- Have significant limitations in communication, mobility and self care
- Have an intellectual disability
- Have a condition for which early intervention would improve functioning
- Be a person for whom intervention would have significant benefits

The Commission also suggests that the NDIS should have an information and referral function for a much larger group of people with a disability, providing information, referrals and linkages to services and supports outside the NDIS.

Once a person has been deemed eligible and their support needs assessed, they would be entitled to a package of supports and services, which would be portable across Australia. They would be able to either:

- Choose their own service providers
- Ask a disability support organisation to assemble the a package on their behalf
- Cash out parts of their funding allocation and direct the funding to services they believe best meet their needs.

The list of supports the NDIS would provide include:

- Aids, equipment, home and vehicle modifications
- Personal care
- Community access – to support community inclusion
- Respite
- Specialist accommodation support
- Domestic assistance
- Transport assistance
- Therapies
- Guide and assistance dogs
- Case management and coordination
- Specialist employment services
- Crisis/emergency support

The Commission calculates that an additional \$6.3 billion is needed to fund the new system and suggests that only the Commonwealth has a sufficient taxation base to meet the cost of the scheme. The Commission therefore proposes the federal government take over funding the entire disability system. They prefer to see the funds drawn from general revenue rather than a specific tax or levy but recommended the funds not be subject to the annual budgetary process and quarantined for NDIS use only.

The Commission has suggested a pilot project in 2014 in one region in Australia. This would extend to the whole of the country the following year, beginning with all new cases of significant disability and some of the groups most disadvantaged by current arrangements such as adults living with ageing parents and young children requiring early intervention. The scheme should be fully functional by 2018.