

Submission

No 37

INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 9-14 YEARS IN NSW

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New South Wales

Submission to the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Children and Young People - Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 years in NSW

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Preamble

National Disability Services (NDS) is the national industry association for disability services, representing over 600 not-for-profit organisations. Collectively, our members operate several thousand services for Australians with all types of disability. NDS's members range in size from small support groups to large multi-service organisations, and are located in every State and Territory across Australia.

NDS NSW provides advice to the NSW Government in relation to all matters affecting the provision of disability services. Our NSW Subcommittee on Children, Young People and their Families meet quarterly.

Introduction

NDS welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry to be conducted by the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Children and Young People. This submission is drawn from a range of work undertaken by NDS over recent years. This includes our current research on children and youth participation in decision making, our issues papers on early childhood intervention, as well as our consultations for a response to the NSW Department of Community Services Review of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*. In 2006, NDS hosted a Forum in NSW entitled *The Next Five Years: Key Issues Facing Children and Young People with a Disability and their Families*. This submission is based largely on the key issues raised at that forum that still require action.

Service Provision Issues for Children and Young People 9-14 years With Disability and their Families

In accordance with the Terms of Reference provided by the Committee, NDS identify the following key issues affecting services for children with disabilities aged 9-14 years in NSW:

1. Education transition issues

- 1.1. Enhance the interface between primary and secondary school educators to breakdown barriers associated with transition from primary to high school for children with a disability, coupled with greater research into the support needs associated with this transition.

- 1.2. Increased funding is needed for streamlined needs-based assessments of children and young people with a disability to minimise educational and social disruption.
- 1.3. Greater investment is needed in educational resources and skills
- 1.4. A need for more cohesive coordination of services through increased consultation between educational providers and disability agencies, alongside a whole of government approach.
2. *Access, capacity and affordability of therapy and specialist services for children and young people with a disability*
 - 2.1. Provide therapy and specialised services at school to save disruption and eliminate transport issues.
 - 2.2. Decrease waiting times through recurrent funding targeted at increasing the number of therapists and allied health professionals with expertise in disability.
3. *Inclusive frameworks that provide children with the knowledge, opportunity and support they need to participate in decision making processes*
 - 3.1. Enhance inclusion of students with a disability and their parents in the education process through provision of appropriate and accessible information.
 - 3.2. Limited literature exists focusing on including children with a disability in decision making. Increased funding into research and development of inclusive models and strategies will enhance intellectual capital in this area.
4. *Flexible, affordable and accessible respite, day programs and accommodation services for children and young people with disability*
 - 4.1. There is high unmet demand for flexible respite and short and long term accommodation services, alongside a need for quality trained staff.
 - 4.2. Stronger links and information sharing should be established between education providers and respite services and day programs.
5. *Inequitable state-wide coverage of services for people with a disability, particularly for rural, indigenous and NESB communities*
 - 5.1. Little choice in appropriate services and supports for marginalised and isolated communities.
 - 5.2. Disability service providers need to develop their cultural competence in meeting the needs of people from Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
6. *Need for human capital investment in the disability service sector*
 - 6.1. Sector wide funded wage increases are needed to attract and retain quality staff.
 - 6.2. Increased provision of specialised training and support. In particular, greater attention should be given to special needs in university undergraduate degrees in education.

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