



Helen Hong
Senior Council Officer
Upper House Committees, Legislative Council
Parliament of New South Wales

18 October 2018

Dear Ms. Hong,

Implementation of the NDIS and the provision of disability services in NSW

CORRECTION TO TRANSCRIPT: PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 2 – HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

On Tuesday 2 October 2018, I attended the Macquarie Room at Parliament House to provide evidence for the Inquiry into *the Implementation of the NDIS and the provision of disability services in NSW*. I attended in the capacity as newly appointed Chief Executive Officer for Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA) and was accompanied by Mr Enis Jusufspahic, National Manager, Sector Development for ECIA.

I write to request a correction to the uncorrected proof. Upon investigation I have inadvertently made an error of fact and, in addition have not provided a clear answer to the question that I was asked. I wish to clarify the answer that I provided to ensure that the Committee are provided the most correct information to consider and assess

Please see my corrected transcript attached to this letter. Thank you for your help with this matter.

Sincerely yours

Yvonne Keane

Chief Executive Officer
Early Childhood Intervention Australia

Tuesday, 2 October 2018 – Legislative Council
Portfolio Committee No.2 – Health and Community Services

E

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Ms Keane, can you potentially map out for us what it used to look like and what it looks like now? From your own experience, from receiving that diagnosis, what was the support surrounding you then and what the situation is at present?

Ms KEANE: My perspective as to what it used to look like is as that of a parent of a child with a disability. Nine years ago I started a service to teach hearing-impaired children to speak just like you or I do, called Hear the Children, simply out of need. We were fortunate, we did not have a waiting list and never turned a child away. We did not have government funding. We simply fundraised to support the amount of families who wanted to enroll. Therapy was provided to families equitably and was free of charge. This was prior to the NDIS, so the child did not need a plan. A family simply made an inquiry with us, we assessed them, and if the child would benefit from our service they were enrolled immediately. The process was pretty instantaneous, perhaps one or two weeks from the time of the initial inquiry until the child was receiving therapy. Every day was vital, from our perspective, as the earlier the child and their family was able to access intervention the greater the outcome would be for that family and child.

Our auditory-verbal therapists would then assess the child and put in place an individual education plan (IEP) for the child based around milestones. Our approach was based upon best practice, and therapy would be delivered with the child's parent sitting next to the child and working interactively with the child. This therapy was delivered in the Hear the Children Centre or in the child's home. We would teach the parents as much as we would teach the child. We provided parents with objectives and milestones to work towards with their child. We would chunk these objectives down into winnable weekly aims. The parents would work with their child in their natural environment. The outcomes were that nine out of ten children developed clear speech.

What we have found now, during this transitional period, is that we are concerningly seeing a considerable amount of cases where children and their families are faced with an extraordinary waiting period before they are able to access services and supports. As you can imagine, every day in a child's formative years between nought and six is vital in terms of having access to consistent best-practice early intervention. So, the concern is that with the transition period in NSW spinning out, we currently have large amounts of children sitting on waiting lists who are not accessing vital and transformative early childhood intervention for significant periods of time. We are advised that these amounts of children might be in the thousands. Anecdotally we are also advised that these children are caught up on waiting lists with the EC Partners, or awaiting access decision or plan approval from the NDIA, for periods of up to a year and maybe more. This is a substantial period of time in a child's formative years, and I am sure you will understand that, in turn, such a delay in access to services and supports can significantly arrest the outcomes for those children and their families. This, no doubt, would have long term implications for the quality of life of the child and that of their family, as well as a long term adverse financial impact upon government.

This issue also highlights the value of advocacy and peak bodies such as Early Childhood Intervention Australia, who can work with government and the NDIA in an agile way to identify critical issues as they emerge and can collaborate to provide interventions and supports to the sector to overcome issues and risks. There is a critical and immediate need for the NSW government to provide additional advocacy funding for organisations such as ECIA. For clarity where ECIA once received recurrent funding support for the NSW Government, we currently receive no funding to aid us in our work to support the sector through the transition.