

CSI 83 SI 10/93 MINISTER FOR HEALTH

## HEARING QUESTIONS PLACED ON NOTICE - WITH RESPONSES

On 27 September 2010, NSW Health appeared before the Standing Committee on Social Issues, the following additional questions were placed on notice after the hearing. The responses to these questions are as follows:

### QUESTION:

#### *Equipment programs*

1. A submission author has stated that the eligibility criteria for the Program of Appliances for Disabled people (PADP) program creates a disincentive for people with a disability to work more than 15 hours a week (submission 42, page 5). This is because to be eligible for the PADP program people must have a Disability Support Pension (DSP) concession card, which is not provided to people who work more than 15 hours a week. In contrast, eligible recipients of the Lifetime Care and Support Scheme are provided with equipment without being required to have a DSP concession card.

a) How is NSW Health addressing this issue, to ensure that people with a disability receive the equipment they require without being penalised for participating in employment?

### ANSWER:

People do not need a Disability Support Pension (DSP) concession card to be eligible for assistance through PADP. Eligibility to the program is based on people having a long-term disability.

Financial criteria is used to classify applications into four income bands, however, there is no upper financial limit. People with disability on high incomes can access the program but are required to make a higher co-contribution while those on pensions or on lower incomes are only required to make a \$100 co-payment regardless of the cost of their equipment. The PADP Policy provides provision to waive the co-payment in situations of severe financial hardship for all applicants.

People with disability who participate in paid part-time employment have access to other types of government funding or tax advantages to assist with the costs associated with working.

The Commonwealth Government has overall responsibility for providing assistance to people with disability in the workforce. Assistance ranges from Centrelink benefits such as the Mobility Allowance, tax offsets for costs of disability-specific equipment and funding assistance for work-place modifications.

Through the unit responsible for PADP (EnableNSW), NSW Health works collaboratively with JobAccess, a Commonwealth funded program to support the provision of equipment which is appropriate for people in their workplace. For example, EnableNSW recently jointly funded a wheelchair with JobAccess for a working person

who needed extra features specifically for his work. EnableNSW funded the wheelchair while JobAccess funded the extra features needed to assist the person in his workplace.

It is difficult to compare programs such as PADP with compensable schemes such as the NSW Lifetime care and Support Scheme as the latter is similar to the third party insurance system and is funded by a levy on all CTP slips. Inequity does exist between government funded programs and insurance-based schemes. This is a national issue that is being investigated as part of the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into the feasibility of a National Disability Long Term Care and Support Scheme.

## **QUESTION:**

### *Collaboration*

2. The Committee has received evidence that people who acquire a physical disability can encounter delays when accessing services after being discharged from hospital and they can sustain an ongoing detrimental effect (submission 67, page 4). How do you suggest the coordination of services provided to people who acquire a disability can be better managed to ensure they do not encounter delays and are supported upon leaving hospital?

## **ANSWER:**

NSW Health has a number of programs that are aimed at reducing any delays in discharge from hospital for people who have acquired a physical disability.

This assistance ranges from equipment provision to case management and personal care.

NSW Health funds the Specialised Equipment Essential for Discharge (SEED) program. This program assists consumers who have had a catastrophic spinal cord or brain injury by providing equipment to enable their safe, effective and timely discharge from hospital.

For people not meeting the criteria for SEED, EnableNSW has developed a priority tool which allocates the highest priority (priority 1) for funding of equipment required to reduce an immediate and serious risk of injury to the client or carer. This means that the equipment is generally funded within 1-2 months.

Equipment required to meet a person's short term needs or to facilitate discharge is often provided by an Equipment Loan Pool, funded by the Area Health Services. Where there is no loan or hire equipment available, EnableNSW increases the priority of the equipment request.

NSW Health has also developed the Compacts Program for patients in NSW Public hospitals who require immediate access to case management and a combination of community services to safely return home from hospital. Assistance through Compacts is usually for time-limited periods while longer term arrangements are being arranged. Some people may receive repeated packages of assistance through Compacts in situations where other support arrangements are delayed.

## **Question 3:**

### *Older carers*

3. The committee has heard that carers, particularly older carers, have significant health problems. What actions are your department taking to ease the burden on carers?

**ANSWER:**

NSW Department of Health has been the lead agency in implementing the whole of Government NSW Carers Action Plan 2007-2012.

On 28 July 2010, the Premier agreed to allocate responsibility for the NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010 to ADHC and to transfer policy responsibility for carers from NSW Department of Health to ADHC. This will include the NSW Carers Action Plan 2007-2012, the evaluation plan for the Carers Action Plan, the statewide NGO Carer Grants Program and peak funding for Carers NSW. NSW Department of Health will continue to work in partnership with ADHC to achieve a smooth transition of the transfer of policy responsibility for carers in NSW.

The NSW Department of Health is committed to making a difference for carers through delivering on our priorities for action in the Carers Action Plan.

Following the transfer of policy responsibility for carers from NSW Department of Health to ADHC, the Department of Health will continue to have lead responsibility for mental health and health policy and service provision including the NSW Family and Carers Mental Health Program and the Area Health Service Carers Support Services.

NSW Department of Health provides over a million dollars annually to fund Area Health Services carers support services. Carers support services focus on increasing the responsiveness of health services to the needs of people who care for others with a range of disabilities and health conditions.

Under the NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010, NSW Department of Health will continue to take action that reflects the principles of the NSW Carers Charter including developing strategies to ensure that the views and needs of carers and the views, needs and best interests of persons for whom they care are taken into account across the continuum of care.

Additionally, actions to reduce the physical burden of carers (especially ageing carers) include strategies such as EnableNSW prioritising PADP equipment applications required for the safety of carers or consumers such as hoists, pressure care equipment and adjustable beds.