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COUNCIL

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INQUIRY INTO SERVICES PROVIDED OR FUNDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGEING, DISABILITY & HOME CARE (ADHC)

Question on notice – Northcott Disability Services

- 1. On page 4 of your submission you discuss the need for more effective case management and futures planning for people with a disability. The Committee has received evidence that clients, particularly those in rural areas, often have problems with the lack of continuity caused by the transient nature of their case managers. There appears to be an unmet need for overall case management. Can you please comment on the case management process adopted by ADHC and explain how futures planning services will assist people with disability and their carers?*

Northcott cannot comment in detail on the case management processes adopted by ADHC as we do not have significant knowledge of these processes. However, we can support that there is unmet need for overall case management services. Currently there are lengthy waitlist for case management services and Northcott believes that there should be additional case management services made available so that all people with a disability and/or their family can have access to case management if they require it.

Quality case management requires skilled staff to help families work out and articulate what their support needs and life goals are, and navigate the disability service system in light of these needs and aspirations. Northcott supports that case management processes should be strengths based, focussing on building capacity and resilience of families (to self-advocate and become their own case managers), rather than provide case management that creates dependency for families to rely on these services to access, understand and negotiate the disability system. Northcott has also found that providing case management along-side the provision of other services (such as therapy) is particularly important for individuals and families with multiple needs and/or complex life circumstances, and can greatly assist in achieving positive outcomes in these situations.

Futures planning is particularly important for carers as they age and need to plan for the future living and care arrangements for their son or daughter. Many older parent carers have been providing care for their son or daughter throughout their life, and can be worried about what the future of their child will be after they pass away. They can also be unsure about the legal and financial options they should consider in order to safeguard the future care and protection of their child.

Providing futures planning services that support carers to start to think about options for the future life of their child, are important in terms of helping the carer feel less anxious about the future for their child; it also helps the planning and organising of services and supports begin at an earlier stage in the life of the person with a disability. Futures planning services can also help the person with a disability develop a vision of their future 'ideal life', and help them start to work towards these life goals. Northcott

supports that while futures planning with older carers is an essential service, it is also a service that should be offered to carers at younger ages, so they too can begin planning for their child and what supports, services, living and care arrangements may be in place once they are no longer able to be the primary carer.

2. *On page 5 of your submission you recommend that eligibility for ADHC services should be expanded to people with any disability, as defined under the Disability Services Act. Can you please tell us about the problems you perceive with the current eligibility criteria?*

As outlined in Northcott's submission and in evidence provided at hearing, we believe the issue is that the current criteria for accessing ADHC direct services, (such as case management or therapy through ADHC's Community Support Teams), is an intellectual disability. This means that clients with a primary physical disability are often disadvantaged in trying to access ADHC services as they don't meet the eligibility criteria. These people may be able to access services through the NGO sector; however there is often a difference in terms of the funding levels and resources afforded to ADHC provided services compared to NGO services. Not only does the distinction between access to government versus NGO services based on disability type appear arbitrary, given the potential impact this funding and resourcing difference could have on service delivery, this appears to be inequitable. Northcott supports ADHC provided services should be available for all people with a disability, regardless of the type of disability.

Are you concerned that broadening ADHC's eligibility criteria would spread funds more widely and perhaps lead to a decline in service quality?

As people without an intellectual disability may already be eligible to receive services through the NGO sector, we do not see that this would markedly increase the numbers of people with a disability who want access to services. Broadening ADHC's eligibility criteria would simply enable all people with a disability to choose government and/or NGO services (regardless of their disability type). However, there is current unmet need in the system and many people with a disability are either missing out on, or not receiving enough of, the services and support they need. Therefore, we would hope that any broadening of eligibility for services would also see increased funding across the sector. Northcott believes the second phase of *Stronger Together* should provide additional funding and increased capacity in the disability service system (both ADHC and NGOs). The establishment of a national disability insurance scheme, which could offer a baseline service to all people with a disability (graduated with increasing levels of need), would work towards addressing any additional costs associated with broad eligibility criteria for services.

Essentially, Northcott supports eligibility for disability services that provides universal entitlement to people with a disability (relative to their need), regardless of the type of disability they have, and advocates for sufficient funding to meet the needs of people with a disability.

Should you require any clarification or further information on this submission please contact Liz Forsyth on (02) 9890 0153 or liz.forsyth@northcott.com.au