

**INQUIRY INTO SERVICES PROVIDED OR FUNDED BY
THE DEPARTMENT OF AGEING, DISABILITY AND
HOME CARE**

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& Education Awareness Services

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Submission to NSW Legislative Council

Inquiry into services provided or funded by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Homecare

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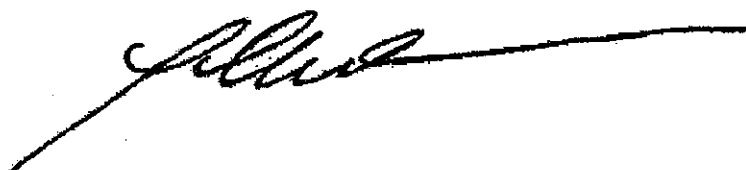
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This report is authorised by the Board of IDEAS NSW

Bob Gilholme
Chairperson
6th August 2010



Background:

IDEAS NSW has been providing human rights based information for people with disability since 1983. As an organisation funded by NSW Ageing, Disability and Homecare, IDEAS NSW has a long history of supporting the rights of people with disability, their families, carers and other supporters to ensure that people with disability have access to information that will enable them to make informed decisions about matters of importance to them. IDEAS NSW believes in the following:

- Information is an integral part of life for all people living in the 21st Century and access to information can often be taken for granted by people who have the skills and resources to obtain it as needed.
- People with disability resident in Australia have the right to access information that will assist them in making decisions about things that are important to them in the daily life.
- Provision of information to people with disability, their families, carers and other supporters should be independent from direct care service delivery. Disability information services should stand alone, and be free of prejudice.
- Provision of information to people with disability needs to be accessible and available in a range of formats that meets their individual needs, e.g. culturally appropriate, translations into other languages, Braille, audio, plain English etc

- Information is a process not just a product, and requires skilled Information Officers who can obtain information from people with disability about their needs, interpret those needs and provide appropriate and accurate information to assist in decision making.
- Information supports advocacy, that is: self advocacy, individual advocacy and systemic advocacy.

Realistic funding:

NSW has maintained funding of information services as part of the NSW Disability Advocacy program initially through the CSTDA and subsequently through the National Disability Agreement. Over the last 9 years the NSW Advocacy and Information program has been under reform and, while nearing completion has been a very long drawn out process. There have been numerous iterations of proposed plans, and currently final drafts of service description schedules for information services and advocacy and information services are being considered. During this time there has been little real growth in funding for existing providers of this program.

The National Disability Agreement outlines a reform agenda which strategically shifts public policy and practice towards empowerment, life long planning, community inclusion, person centred planning and participation to enable people with a disability to live their lives as they wish.

To meet this objective, **realistic funding for information provision** by an honest/independent broker is required to ensure that all the aims and objectives of ADHC's NSW Disability Information Program are met. The following is an extract

from the "Overview of NSW Disability Information Program" March 2010 authored by ADHC and supported by IDEAS:

"In order to exercise choice and maximise independence, and minimise reliance on others, people require access to accurate information that will help them manage their own lives, understand their options, access community, and engage on issues.

"Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives." James Madison

An inclusive community also requires that family, friends, colleagues and other community members have access to information so they can better support and interact with a person with a disability. The ability to access 'knowledge' is critical to social inclusion.

Information services provide accessible information to people with a disability and their families and carers as well as the broader community. The support provides specific information about access to the community, disability supports and equipment and promotes the development of community awareness. Information support may include contact by face-to-face, phone, print, Braille, audio or email. Information services may also utilise easy-to-read formats, including plain English and community languages, culturally welcoming images, e-text and symbol communication to increase the reach of information."

ADHC acknowledges the important role that information plays. IDEAS is prepared to work in partnership with ADHC to achieve the program outcomes but require **ADHC to address the real cost of providing information** across the wide range of

multiple media technologies that are available and utilised by people in the community today.

Further information about the services provided by IDEAS NSW can be found at Appendix A and Appendix B