

Submission
No 59

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

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Sunnyfield Submission
to the NSW Legislative
Council's Standing
Committee on Social
Issues

**Inquiry into services provided or
funded by Ageing, Disability and
Home Care.**

August 2010

1. Introduction

Sunnyfield welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Standing Committee on Social Issues.

There is no doubt that there has been significant improvement in the quality and quantity of disability services provided in recent years, especially under the Stronger Together Program.

However, there is more significant improvement required in the Disability Sector, both by the government and non-government organisations.

2. Sunnyfield

Sunnyfield's core purpose is to enrich the lives of people with intellectual disabilities by creating choice, opportunities and independence for them to lead the lives they want.

To enable people with intellectual disabilities to:

- to exercise whole of life choices;
- be as independent as they can and want to; and
- feel and be valued by the community.

As a short background, Sunnyfield was originally established in 1952 by a group of parents keen to create opportunities for their children with disabilities. The group started the Sunnyfield (Fisher Road) School and subsequently expanded operations to create a hostel and later an activity/therapy and accommodation centre at Allambie Heights.

We have grown to become one of the largest and most progressive disability service providers in NSW, supporting over 1,700 people with a disability across NSW to achieve an optimum level of independence, and more recently through our person centred approach developing outcomes for the people we support. Sunnyfield accommodates people it supports in 36 houses situated in Sydney's northern suburbs and the Central Coast and maintains two large residential centres at Allambie. In addition to our accommodation services Sunnyfield is one of the State's leading providers of day services, respite and supported employment services.

Throughout our 58 year history Sunnyfield has shown that it has a significant understanding of the issues that periodically effect people with a disability in NSW. This can be in some way attributed to the fact that as a member based organisation we have continuous interaction with parents and other immediate primary carers for people with a disability.

3. Stronger Together II Submission

Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) issued a paper called 'A new direction for Disability Services in NSW 2006 – 2016. The next five years – a consultation paper' in June 2010. They asked for submissions on this paper by 19 July 2010.

We believe our submission on Stronger Together II also covers the majority of the points in the Terms of Reference for this Standing Committee. Therefore, we have attached Sunnyfield's Submission to this paper for the Standing Committee's consideration.

4. Terms of Reference

The following comments are made in addition to our submission on Stronger Together II.

4.1 Service Delivery by ADHC

There has been a move in recent years for ADHC to move out of direct service delivery. We are not saying this is a good or bad development, however the needs of the people with disabilities should drive this program, not the needs of ADHC or the Non Government Organisations (NGO's):

- If programs remain with ADHC then they should be subject to the same audits, checks and controls that are placed on the NGO's; and
- If the programs are to be put out to tender then they should be adequately funded to ensure the NGO's can supply best practice service delivery to people with disabilities.

4.2 Extent of Unmet Demand

Do we really know what the extent of unmet demand is? The answer is no! Until this is determined, we don't really know the extent of the problem we face. We need more transparency and honesty on the level of unmet demand in NSW for disability needs and service.

4.3 Historical and Current Level of Funding

Following on from the above, it is obvious that the level of funding has been, is and will continue to be insufficient. The question for the Committee to consider should be:

- What is the gap in funding and current (and future) need?
- How do we fund the gap?

This is not an issue for ADHC alone; it is an issue for all in NSW, and Australia.

4.4 Waiting Lists

Following on from points 4.2 and 4.3 the impact is obviously waiting lists.

The current approach is to allocate most services on a "needs" basis. Due to the huge shortage of supported accommodation, the allocation is done on a "crisis" basis.

As long as there is a chronic shortage, we encourage ADHC to continue allocating "services" on the basis of whose needs are greatest. We further encourage them to make this process more fair, open and transparent. Some parties who 'shout the

loudest' sometimes get the service rather than someone else who could be in more need.

However, the ultimate solution is to solve the issue of unmet demand.

4.5 Advocacy Organisations

Sunnyfield is a supporter of people with disabilities having access to an Advocate. It is a critical service for people with disabilities and families who are unable or unwilling to advocate for themselves. The majority of Advocacy Organisations provide an excellent service to their clients. However, some organisations are not always professional and do not add value to the lives of the people they are advocating for. We believe that the same checks and controls placed on NGO's should be placed on Advocacy Organisations who are funded by ADHC. This should ensure the clients receive a professional and supportive advocacy service.

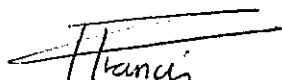
5. Conclusion

The message is quite simple. Given their current level of resources both ADHC and the NGO's provide the best service they can to people with disabilities and their families. However the services are not enough, are not necessarily what people want and are not really good enough.

We need to:

- Increase the funding to the sector (ie via an insurance levy like the National Disability Scheme).
- Provide services using a person centred approach which delivers what the people want and need.
- Introduce flexibility into the funding arrangements. Some people may wish to remain in the current system (blocked funding), some may wish to organise the provision of their services themselves (along with their families) and most will want to be somewhere between these two extremes – it is their choice.
- Improve the inclusion of people with disabilities into our community. Until they are valued (and actually feel valued) by society we won't have full inclusion. When we have full inclusion, then people with disabilities can have full lives, if they want to.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters further with the Standing Committee.



Frank Francis
Chief Executive Officer

August 2010