

**Submission
No 10**

**INQUIRY INTO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL
DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME AND THE PROVISION
OF DISABILITY SERVICES IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Northern Prosthetics

Date Received: 29 June 2018

27/06/2018

Inquiry into the implementation of the NDIS and the provision of Disability Services in New South Wales

Submission: Northern Prosthetics

Northern Prosthetics is a small local business that provides Prosthetic Service provision to amputees across the Northern Rivers area. We are the only service provider for prosthetic limbs in the Northern Rivers area. Our service provision includes the prescription, manufacture and fitting of custom made prosthetic limbs as well as the ongoing service and maintenance required to ensure clients are comfortable and able to function. We also fit and supply consumable items such as silicone liners and stump socks that are required by prosthetic users on a regular basis.

We attend Amputee Clinics at Ballina, Lismore and Murwillumbah and run prosthetic clinics at Palm Beach (QLD), Grafton, Maclean and Coffs Harbour. Our business and workshop facility is located in Broken Head, NSW.

Our publicly funded NSW clients who have previously had their prosthetic needs funded by Enable NSW have been transitioning onto the NDIS as of July, 2017. To date, we have completed 24 NDIS Assistive Technology Assessments and created quotes and submissions for the NDIS in relation to the prosthetic needs for these participants. Of these 24 participants, only one has had their Assistive Technology needs funded in full, two have received approval for partial funding. As I write this submission we have participants who are still waiting for approvals when their request for Assistive Technology was submitted to the NDIS 6 months ago. In the scheme of a 12month plan, this is unacceptable timeframe.

We have tried to assist advocating for our participants for quicker turn around times for funding approvals through many avenues including:

- Directing participants to follow up regularly with their Local Area Co-ordinators
- Direct contact with Local Area Co-Ordinator's in our region who are dealing with participants with amputations
- Direct contact with Senior Planners at the NDIS Lismore office
- Contact with Limbs 4 Life, a national amputee advocacy body
- Contact Amputee NSW, a state amputee advocacy body
- Contact with our professional body, The Australian Orthotic and Prosthetic Association

We are currently in the process of engaging our Local Members of Parliament at the State and Federal level.

At present, we have flagged 5 of our participants as urgent with the NDIS Lismore office, meaning they are at high risk of falls and related injuries and/or skin break down and stump wounds. Some of these clients have had to stop wearing their prosthetic limbs, meaning they are now limited in their mobility, had to take time off work and reduced their involvement in the community. Lack of funding for our other clients means they are not able to access consumable items, such as silicone liners and stump socks, or have required repairs/maintenance or check up appointments that are best practice to ensure our clients prosthesis is fitting well, comfortable, functioning as appropriate and safe.

Firstly, we would like to see this funding approval bottleneck addressed for the health and safety of our clients, most of whom Northern Prosthetics have been providing services to for many years.

Secondly, this lack of funding over the last 8 months (since our first client became a participant) is now having significant financial implications on our business. Without funding, our workload has reduced and therefore our income. We do also see clients who are under different funding systems, so we do still have a portion of our normal estimated revenue coming in.

However, the last few months we have barely made budget in order to pay our staff and run our business. The future of our business is directly related to our ability to be able to provide prosthetic limbs and services to our clients who are funded by the NDIS. If the current trend continues into the near future it would bring Northern Prosthetics to the point of having to cut staffing and reduce services we provide.

As a business we have also been spending innumerable hours in administration attempting to learn the processes and procedures of the ever-growing NDIS system, from how to use the portal to locating the allocated budgets for funding for our participants. Not to mention the hours we put into communications at all levels trying to assist our participants in receiving their funding in order to minimise the impact their disability has on their ability to complete their daily activities and physical and emotional health. This clearly impacts our ability to provide a holistic service aiming to improve their quality of life.

We look forward to working with the NDIS and local administrators in the future and are open to feedback and advice on how we can manage the issues we are facing at present. We are still very positive about the NDIS and the opportunity the scheme should provide our participants and our business once it is up and running in a fully funded capacity.

This submission is being made on behalf of Northern Prosthetics as a business and all of our current and future NDIS participants.

For any further information, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Your sincerely,

Imogen Dingle

Senior Prosthetist and Clinical Manager

Northern Prosthetics

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