

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

Submission to the Inquiry into the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the provision of disability services in NSW

NSW Parliament

To whom it may concern,

Please note that I have offered honest criticism of my local council, the NDIA and their local partner organisation and some NSW processes. It is for this reason that I would like my submission to remain confidential if at all possible. I have to live in my community and the last thing I need is even more discrimination from disgruntled council staff etc.

I am legally blind. I am a recipient of NDIS funding and I use various other NSW disability services. Although, I must say that living in _____, the most accessible services are across the _____ order and many are not available to me.

My experiences with the NDIS have been mainly negative. I am an intelligent, well educated and self-sufficient person in the main. That said, I do rely on a variety of supports within the community. What I do not need is some bureaucrat telling me what my life goals should or should not be. My main criticism with the NDIS process is about planning and planning meetings. Frankly, I could write my own plan and if I had access to the decision making guidelines, I could make the process a lot shorter and more simple. I understand that the planning process is National, but I think it is important for you to know that people like me are often offended by the way we are treated and by the lack of support within the system to change our plans if our circumstances change.

In the main, the services I use in NSW can be broken into a few categories.

- Transport support. Taxi subsidy, Public Transport and community transport. These services are very poorly coordinated and I am often left having to walk long distances across roads with no crossing facilities because there is simply no other way to get around. This is terrible. Another problem is that local bus drivers are inadequately trained and I am often left standing at a bus stop because the driver does not bother to stop even though I use a guide dog and stand at the pole of the bus stop. This is all easily fixed, but not addressed. I hope your inquiry recognises

transport as a disability support, because for blind and low vision people, it is essential.

- Advocacy services. – I have had problems with access in my community and the local council are absolutely appalling at dealing with requests for improvements to infrastructure. They seem to base decisions on popularity, rather than genuine need and safety. I am on the local council access committee. I am one of only two disabled people on a committee of about 10 people. It is a talk fest and I have seen very little tangible in the way of improving services undertaken by council. I think the committee is a box ticking exercise on their part and is only there because it seems like a good idea to them to have something in case they get into trouble.
- Health services. – Frankly, they are not accessible to me locally. Apart from my local GP that is. I have to spend a lot of money getting to and from appointments in _____ or _____ and the NDIS does not assist with this at all.
- Complaints and discrimination laws and processes. The NSW Anti-Discrimination Board is pointless. They do not appear to enforce legislation and work on an airy fairy approach to conciliation which defaults to expensive legal cases if their processes fail to reach outcomes through conciliation. My experiences in NSW as opposed to the ACT, SA and the federal system are that it is a bit of a joke. I had cause to complain about an issue this year and the service I received was appalling. The outcome was non-existent and the process was bureaucratic, inaccessible and broken. Once again, there is no local office and the services were based in _____. NSW should look at the ACT or Federal model for Human Rights Commissions, rather than the outdated and ineffective anti discrimination board we have. The NSW government could save money on advocacy if they had better and more accessible systems for dealing with complaints. Until you make a decision to support disabled people, then you are going to have to spend money on advocacy services or risk the safety and wellbeing of disabled people.

Disability advocacy is essential. The NDIS is a monster and is unwieldy. I have had two plans so far and both have involved me having to approach the Commonwealth Ombudsman to resolve relatively simple issues. This is because the NDIA is poorly managed, Local Area Coordinators in my area (there is only one) are useless and incompetent and I have had nothing but stress and hassle trying to resolve simple issues. This is an area that I can advocate for myself in the main, but I have experience in the public sector.

I would hate to be a person with an intellectual or more complex disability because I would need people to advocate for me. Those people are around and work for organisations like _____ or _____. The problem is that they are over worked because the NDIA is letting us down with over complicated processes, bloody minded budgeting and stupid bureaucracy. NSW is the biggest state and we should be able to influence how that process can be improved.

Then there are issues like local councils, roads, buses, access to services etc. These are areas where disabled people are drowned out by noise. Other people come first. Popularity comes

before access in NSW and there is nowhere for individuals to get issues addressed effectively in a timely manner. Disability organisations need funding to be able to support us in this area.

You also need to be aware that removing supports from us like transport assistance for example, means that those supports are gone. The NDIS does not replace those supports and in fact makes it almost impossible to get assistance for many things that are better placed at local or state level.

Last of all, I want to raise my biggest concern. That being appalling and discriminatory treatment and there being no expertise in the NDIS or the NSW system about blindness and low vision. People seem to take a generic approach to how people with disabilities are all treated. I am sure people with different disabilities will have the same or similar issues. Here is one simple example of how NDIS choice and control is removed in my case. There is one LAC in my area and they have made some huge mistakes in submitting plans for me. Eg. Forgetting to include my guide dog in my first plan and failing to assist appropriately with my second plan. It is time to stop treating me like an idiot and time to start listening. The same goes for many NSW Government services. There are very few avenues to address concerns and complaints. This is compounded by terrible anti-discrimination laws and complaint handling processes.

For example, The NSW taxi subsidy scheme voucher form. It is printed in tiny font that I cannot read. I have to trust the taxi driver to tell me the truth and I have no way of reading taxi meters. (Seriously? A form in the 21st century in NSW, Australia). In my view the only reason that issue has not been fixed is because it is not a populist issue and only affects a few people. (Discrimination 101). There are many other examples. This is why we NEED advocacy services because as individuals, we are powerless and politicians do not care about us one little bit.

Sincerely,