

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

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INQUIRY INTO THE IMPEMENTATION OF THE NDIS AND THE PROVISION OF DISABILITY SERVICES
IN NSW

Dear Committee,

Thank you for establishing this absolutely essential inquiry. Unfortunately, I would imagine that the submissions received will greatly under represent the problems experienced throughout the disability sector, as a considerable proportion of these vulnerable individuals do not have the comprehensive and/or the communication skills to do so. In many cases, either do their significant others . In other cases, parents and carers are simply too stressed and exhausted.

I am a parent of a young man with complex needs and extremely challenging behaviours. My son has resided in an ADHC Group home for over 12 years. Although we have had some hiccups, overwhelmingly we have been happy with the services provided. I was agahst when I heard of the impending privatisation of ADHC. While NGOs may be “ not for profit “, they are certainly “ not for loss “ either. One cannot imagine how this could ever be a viable proposition, particularly when it involves individuals with complex needs. We were advised that there would be extensive consultation in the selection of a new service provider, however, with only one such entity in contention, there was no choice. The Service Agreement with the accommodation provider involved extensive negotiation and 3 drafts. Our new service provider promises to” help” find alternative accommodation (where ???,with whom ??? with what choice???), should they choose to end the Agreement. This is an extremely concerning scenario. Sadly the case was reported last year of a young man in Victoria with autism who was locked up alone in a derelict house by his NGO with minimal contact from support workers. He managed to escape, assaulting the first person he encountered and consequently ending up in the criminal justice system. The government needs to have in place “stop gap” measures for when privatisation fails. We did have a good system under ADHC – always some back up where no one might fall through the cracks.

In September 2017, we were hit with the “double whammy” of the roll out of the NDIS coinciding with the transfer of former ADHC services to the private sector. This was an incredibly difficult time, dealing with so many unknowns and such new territory for NDIS clients, their carers and service providers. We have had several issues dealing with the changes.

Firstly, my son has had no behaviour support intervention since September 2017. The behaviour support budget was taken up almost entirely with report writing and Restricted Practice documentation. There was a small amount of observation time, however NO training for staff or implementation of prescribed therapy. The therapist reported having difficulties in contacting the Group Home (as did the Occupational Therapist and Support Coordinator). Lack of communication between Service Providers and the Group Home support workers was a real issue. My son’s behaviour was escalating . Unfortunately the last resort was to increase medication (which had been reduced without any problem 6 years prior). Regular training for support workers is imperative.

With the NDIS in place, training costs come out of the client's budget and can be considerable when there are many staff involved. Budget allocation needs to reflect this.

Secondly, there is no longer induction for new support workers. Previously, under ADHC, new support workers experienced some training alongside their co-workers to get to know their new clients. This is an absolute recipe for failure.

Thirdly, Group Home support staff are not rostered on when residents are at day programme. In the incident of my son becoming ill while at day programme (which recently happened with a gastric attack), he is unable to go home. Again, this is not acceptable for either my son, his day programme workers or other day programme attendees.

Fourthly, I am concerned about the long term viability of the Group Home being able to maintain its vehicle. Even if all the residents choose to contribute all their transport allowance, maintaining the vehicle would not be sustainable. It is essential that a specially fitted vehicle is readily available, particularly in a regional area such as ours.

Lastly, I am concerned that the sector will lose valuable, experienced support workers as their conditions deteriorate and have already witnessed this occurrence. I am concerned about the number of new Service Providers with limited, or no, experience. I am concerned that in regional areas there can be a shortfall of Specialist Practitioners.

My son received his 2nd NDIS plan 2 months ago. I was extremely disappointed with the NDIA Planner, who clearly had limited knowledge of disabilities – it was a frustrating experience! My son has been under funded, even where practitioners have provided reports and quotes. I am still waiting for my Support Coordinator to have the costings finalised for his day programme. I am worried as I have heard many others have lost day programme hours.

We were promised that “no one would be worse off” under NDIS. Unfortunately, there are a lot of short falls. I do believe the NDIS to be a wonderful initiative. It needs some tweaking and sufficient continued funding. We also need to remember that “Choice and Control” is only as good as your advocates, when you have limited comprehension skills. We need to take care of these vulnerable citizens (who don't vote).

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on these issues,

Yours faithfully,