

Submission
No 220

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

Organisation: Silverlea Early Childhood Services

Date Received: 9 August 2018

NDIS Submission;

Systemic and policy issues concerning the provision of disability services and the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in New South Wales.

Introduction

This NDIS Submission is to highlight the challenges faced by disability service providers due to the National Disability Insurance Scheme with special focus on low population, isolated areas and limited access/choice of Early Intervention.

This Submission refers to points;

Point (h) – Challenges facing disability service providers and their sustainability

Point (c) – Accessibility of Early Intervention

Point (i) – Incidents where inadequate disability supports result in greater strain on other community services

Introduction to Silverlea Early Childhood Services Inc.

Silverlea Early Childhood Services Inc. is an Early Intervention Service for children with a disability and/or developmental delay from birth to eight years old. Silverlea's Educators and staff strive to achieve the best outcomes for children with disabilities and/or developmental delay and their families in a best practice, routines based approach in the classroom, within school/preschool and also in the child's natural environment. Silverlea work collaboratively with other professionals and services and also provide keyworkers to assist families with the many appointments and information necessary to give the best outcomes for both the child and family.

Silverlea staff has been providing this service since 1960 when parents of intellectually disabled children felt there was an urgent need for special education facilities in Broken Hill. Jean Shaw and Clarie Terry were teaching children from their homes and at a hall located at the back of a church prior to the opening of the school in the May of 1960. In the June of 1971 there was a building built by the Education Department in collaboration with other not-for profit organisations such as The Rotary Club of Broken Hill, in Rakow Street and Silverlea still occupy the same building today in 2018.

Silverlea is a not-for-profit charity organisation now operating as an NDIS provider and previously as an ECEI Transition Provider for the year July 17 to June 18. This role ended in June 2018 due to the recognised conflict of ECEI Transition Providers also being NDIS Service Providers. This role has since been reallocated to Mission Australia.

Silverlea Early Childhood Services prides itself on the philosophy of the service and its long history supporting children and families in the local area.

Silverlea is the only specialised Early Intervention service in Broken Hill who supports children from birth – 8 years and is comprised of CEO, Educators, Administration and a Board made up of local passionate people volunteering their time to attend meetings and support/assist the CEO and the organisation.

Scope

Through analysis of expenditure and income, speaking with families and working out a new costing system for Silverlea there have been many resulting downsides to NDIS and the viability of Silverlea. We aim to discuss and bring to your attention the concerns in our local organisation and community and recommend changes to resolve the challenges and sustainability issues and prevent our local town from losing its only Early Intervention service.

Analysis

Since changes to block funding in 2014 Silverlea Early Childhood Services have made every effort to implement changes to service delivery and networks in the local community including; potential partnerships and mergers with local preschools and therapy services, research into state and federal funding opportunities and rental agreements for extra income and proposals with other local like-minded services which would result in extra funding and more space/building for service delivery. It is important to note that with every effort made none of the above strategies were able to be implemented successfully enough to create a viable future.

Prior to NDIS Silverlea Early Childhood was block funded by ADHC at approximately \$230,000.00 per year. NDIS plans currently are only making a total of \$1500.00 per month equating to \$18,000.00 per year. If we cannot replace this lost revenue, Silverlea will be obliged to cease operation within the next 12 months after 58 years of continuous service to the most vulnerable members of our community.

The lack of scale due to Broken Hill's isolated location results in lower numbers of attending clients for Silverlea in an NDIS environment, although there is still a definite need for Early Intervention in Broken Hill. Without Silverlea's dedication and great work many families would have to travel at least 3 hours or more to receive Early Intervention. Primary Schools, Preschools and Health will be put under immense strain if Silverlea does not succeed in the NDIS environment due to the need for early intervention and transition support. With a higher number of students with developmental delay and no support, teachers will be overwhelmed in the classroom and will require extensive training and extra staff to support children and their developmental needs.

Many of the children that attend Silverlea do not meet criteria for NDIS even though they have a definitive delay or disability. For Silverlea, this means in the NDIS environment they must charge fees which sadly results in a lot of clients falling through the gaps because many low socio-economic families in Broken Hill and the Far West cannot afford to pay for Early Intervention, resulting in many children not getting the Early Intervention they require and not achieving the best outcomes for the child and family.

Previously being block funded, Silverlea were able to provide support to all families needing early intervention services which is in line with our Mission Statement and what we do as a service. Without this funding children will go without intervention and fall through the gaps.

After investigation of necessary expenses and income Silverlea is aware that to be sustainable, it cannot survive relying solely on NDIS. The organisation would end the financial year 2019 approximately 210,000.00 in deficit based on the current children with NDIS plans and the small number of children paying fees this year alone.

Services for children in the NDIS environment are rapidly failing and fearing closure due to underfunding of participants. Apart from the children without an NDIS plan, the end result of NDIS could be that people with a disability or developmental delay may have a support plan, but no services to use them in regional and remote NSW.

Conclusion

Silverlea Early childhood Services is committed to an ongoing evaluation of the ECEI Approach. We are working with families to offer flexible services which include community connections, integration support in mainstream services and home based Early Intervention under the NDIS model.

Recommendations

We recommend:

- Review the limited community referral pathway options in small communities.
- Investment and time is required to up skill mainstream Education service providers to support children with disability and developmental delay.
- The state government provide block funding for early intervention services in regional and remote NSW for children without NDIS plans.

Sincerely,

Silverlea Early Childhood Services Inc
158 Rakow Street (PO Box 984)
BROKEN HILL NSW 2880
Ph: 08 80873971
Email: secs@internode.on.net
Website: www.bhearlyintervention.com.au

