

Submission
No 265

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

Organisation: Hunter Prelude

Date Received: 9 August 2018

09/08/2018

To Hon. Greg Connelly

Committee Chair

RE: Inquiry into the Implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the Provision of Disability Services in New South Wales August 2018

I am writing to you as a representative of Hunter Prelude, an Early Intervention Service Provider of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Hunter Prelude is a not for profit organisation that provides early childhood intervention & therapy services to children (0-12 years) with developmental delay and/or disability, and their families.

Hunter Prelude has provided services in the Hunter Valley for over 30 years and more recently has been a Transition Partner of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) National Early Childhood Early Intervention approach.

This submission will focus on the following Terms of Reference areas:

- (c) the accessibility of early intervention supports for children,
- (e) Provision of Support Services, for people with disability regardless of whether they are eligible or ineligible to participate in the National Disability Insurance Scheme,

This submission will provide evidence in the following key areas of our services:

1. Early Intervention
2. Therapy
3. Supported Playgroups

Accessibility of Early Intervention Supports for Children

Prior to the NDIS, Hunter Prelude was able to provide early intervention and therapy support to children and their families using both individual and group based models of service delivery primarily funding by the Department of Family Services - Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC).

The eligibility for services was that children;

- Were located in our local government areas
- Had a disability diagnosis or;
- Were *at risk* of Developmental Delay

Prior to NDIS, Hunter Prelude was able to provide Supported Playgroups in the community using a partnership model primarily funded by the Department of Family Services - Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC).

The eligibility for services was that children;

- Were supported by a parent or carer to attend the Playgroup

- Were *at risk* of Developmental Delay or;
- Parents *required capacity building support* for their child's development

Recently, Hunter Prelude participated as a Transition Partner to support children and their families to access the National Early Childhood Early Intervention approach.

Hunter Prelude provided the following services as per the 7 Functions of Early Childhood Early Intervention Services:

1. Information & Profile Development
2. Community Connections
3. Initial Supports
4. Access Requests
5. Plan Development
6. Plan Handover & Implementation
7. Plan Review

These services, as per our funding agreement, have ended as of 29th of June, 2018.

As part of the handover of this work, Hunter Prelude provided the NDIA with data on children requiring ongoing support or waiting to commence services.

The new Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) Providers have since been announced.

As of 09/08/18 we have not been contacted by the new provider for any support for the transition.

As of the 09/08/18 we have not received any new referrals for children with a NDIS plan developed with the new ECEI provider.

As of the 09/08/18 we have reports from NDIA that the new ECEI providers have not yet commenced services to children in our local area.

We continue to receive enquires from families and have no other choice but to direct them to providers central 1800 phone number.

As a NDIS funded service provider and a community organisation we have significant concerns about the gaps in service provision which as of this date, are for an unknown duration.

We have significant concerns if the 7 functions of ECEI will not continue with the new providers, in particular the Initial Supports that have previously been provided by Education and Allied Health specialists.

Overall, for those children who will receive ongoing support from service providers under the NDIS, we have seen accessibility move away from state funded eligibility of children who were at risk of developmental delay to children who now require evidence of disability and/or developmental delay.

Of note, children whose access to services that have been restricted under the NDIS include, but are not limited to children diagnosed with:

- Autism Level 1
- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
- Attention Hyperactive Deficit Disorder (ADHD)
- Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD)

- Children who now require formal diagnosis or written evidence of concerns of functional impact (ie Paediatrician Report, Psychologist Assessment, Allied Health Report etc)

Prior to the NDIS these cohorts of children would have received equitable access to services in a timely manner where waiting lists permitted.

In addition, our Supported Playgroups provided under an ADHC funded partnerships model are no longer funded under the NDIS.

Since transition to full funding under the NDIS 1 July, 2018, Hunter Prelude has needed to withdraw support for these playgroups.

This has meant that these playgroups no longer exist or are no longer Supported Playgroups with Educator or Allied Health support.

This means that children who are not eligible for NDIS funding, who were able to receive individual or group based supports prior to the NDIS, no longer have access to these services.

Please see attached for more information on the evidence base Support Playgroup model and impact for our families of the NDIS.

Provision of Support Services, for people with disability regardless of whether they are eligible or ineligible to participate in the National Disability Insurance Scheme,

As per the above information we would like to further highlight the gaps in the provision of support services for children in New South Wales following the transition to the NDIS.

It is clear that the eligibility to access both individual, group and community based services has changed between funding under ADHC and now under the NDIS.

There are many children who have been deemed ineligible for NDIS plans who require capacity building support services for their child's development.

Hunter Prelude would like the committee to consider our Support Playgroups as a key example in which children and families who require capacity building and inclusion support will no longer have access to the same or similar services.

Hunter Prelude have been the lead organisation for our Supported Playgroups and provided the following resources under ADHC funding;

- Program Coordinator
- Educator
- Speech Pathologist
- Occupational Therapists
- Physiotherapist (available for consultation as needed)

We have partnered with local services that also attend and provide support including:

- Family Support services
- Domestic Violence & Homelessness services
- Multicultural & Settlement services
- Mainstream referral services

- Aboriginal Land Council
- Local councils & libraries
- Department of Education

The options for these children and families now include:

1. Facilitated Playgroups lead by families or one of the partner organisations, that will include support from some of our partners (others also had to withdraw due to funding changes)
2. Community Playgroups lead by families with no formal support services

With the exception of unique playgroups with some limited Department of Education support these Playgroups do not have the specialist skills of an Educator available to children and families.

These above Playgroup models do not have the specialist skills of Allied Health Professionals available to children and families.

On providing advocacy for families and our service to local Members of Parliament, NDIA and Playgroup NSW we have received the following responses:

- Apply for NDIA Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Funding
- ILC funding will not be provided for Support Playgroups
- Inclusive supported playgroups in the community are not a funded support under the NDIS. The request for supported playgroups does not meet the NDIA Operational Guidelines 10.7 *Does the funding of the support take into account what is reasonable to expect others to provide?*

Hunter Prelude has been working closely with both the University of Newcastle and Sydney University to complete Action Research on our Playgroups.

Please see attached support letter from Dr. Amanda Howard as additional information regarding the evidence base behind our model and the significant impact on families who will now go without these local services because of the transition to NDIS funding.

Please also find as part of our submission letters from our families to provide you with additional information about the benefits of the Support Playgroups and the significant impact on families who will now go without these services because of the transition to NDIS funding.

Summary

The Implementation of the NDIS has had a significant impact on the provision of disability services in New South Wales.

This impact has been at high risk for children and families who require early intervention support services.

We have observed that due to the decreasing access requirements less children have supports available.

We have observed that due to the decreasing access requirements there is a delay for children to receive services while they gather evidence of the functional impact of their developmental delay or disability.

We have observed that children who do not receive access to the NDIS, no longer have the same access to ongoing community based support services available that were prior to the NDIS.

Redirection to mainstream services (i.e. Chronic Disease Management Plan funding or Community Health services) have not filled this gap in service provision.

Recommendations

1. Release of more flexible ILC funding grant rounds in NSW
2. Funding to the Non – Government Sector in NSW for Community Inclusion Programs including Supported Playgroups that can work in conjunction with the NDIS that are inclusive for all children
3. Further Brokerage opportunities for the Non- Government Sector to work alongside the mainstream silos of NDIA, Health, Education and Community Services departments to fill the gaps
4. Support for a federal review of mainstream support funding including Chronic Disease Management Plans for children who are not eligible for NDIS to access Allied Health services

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the NSW Parliament with information for the Inquiry into the Implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the provision of disability services in New South Wales

Please do not hesitate to contact if you have any questions or require any further information.

Kimberly Lewis (Mulder)

On behalf of Hunter Prelude