

Messages for service provision under DisabilityCare Australia, which have arisen from the consultations of the NDIS Workforce Ready Project – June 2013

1. People with disability and their families should be able to consistently receive high quality and innovative supports that enable them to maximise independent lifestyles and their full inclusion in the mainstream community.
2. People with disability and their families should exercise the maximum choice and control possible in the planning and delivery of their supports, including decisions relating to the selection of people who will be responsible for providing their support services.
3. People with disability and their families vary in their preparedness and capacity to direct and monitor their own services, as does their degree of vulnerability to neglect and abuse (malpractice), which needs to be taken into account when recruiting and monitoring direct support staff.
4. There is a need to safeguard the best interests of people with disability and their families by having in place mechanism to ensure only those persons who are ‘good citizens’ work in the disability sector, and to prevent malpractice.
5. There is need to have established systems that can respond to allegations and established situations of malpractice (especially with respect to preventing the vocational mobility of those who have an established record of malpractice).
6. There is a need to attract and retain good people, who are ‘right for the job’; that is people who listen to, serve, and support people with disability to achieve their goals.
7. There is a need to create career paths for those who seek to work in support of people with disability in the longer term.
8. There is a need to provide a system that accommodates those who might only work part-time, or for short periods in the disability sector.
9. There is a need to provide a system that can accommodate family members who provide paid care, and others in the community who work as volunteers.
10. The tasks asked of the disability sector workforce vary greatly in their complexity, and consequently so do the levels of experience, skills and knowledge required to perform these tasks; from relatively simple domestic

assistance to work involving health care, assistance with medication, and psycho-social educational programmes.

11. Values and attitudes are considered to be the basis for an effective workforce. Some of the core values to be identified for the workforce included ‘human rights’ (as referenced in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, 2006), and fundamental principles such as the exercise of choice, self-determination, and community inclusion.
12. Experience and skills acquired in a variety of ways need to be recognised; including experience and skills developed through personal experience (e.g., linguistic or cultural competencies) practical work (having previously supported a person with disability, including a relative or friend) and informal training (self-initiated or provided by an employer, but not necessarily accredited under the Australian Qualifications Framework or other such scheme).
13. Knowledge gained through formal (accredited) educational programmes need to be recognised, and people should be encouraged and rewarded for having pursued formal education commensurate with the needs of their clients and their personal career objectives.
14. On-going and in-service education and training are vital to maintain currency of knowledge and skills.
15. Specialist and advanced knowledge and skills need to be recognised
16. Some areas of practice should require formal accreditation
17. Issues of accreditation and remuneration need to be considered together. That is, industrial agreements will need to recognise those who attain higher levels of accreditation with higher levels of remuneration. Such an integrated system will be important to both recognise and encourage people to develop their skills and knowledge, and in turn raise standards of practice.
18. Strategies are needed to ensure consistency in the quality of training and assessment , and in the outcomes to these courses, including maintaining consistency and standards in AQF accredited programmes, where currently there is evidence of diversity in quality of outcome despite standardisation of units of competency.
19. Formal recognition of people who are ‘right for the job’ needs to be introduced gradually; to ensure that we do not lose the many good people that are currently working in the sector Summary of Key Findings including paid family carers and those in the community who work as volunteers in the

disability sector; and to ensure that any such system does not impede others coming to the sector – especially those who might have experienced difficulties or disadvantage in education, those from non-English speaking backgrounds, and those with a disability themselves.

20. The introduction of any such scheme needs to take into account workforce shortages in regional, rural and remote areas, and work towards supporting those who currently are, or who could potentially be, ‘right for the job’ to attain the necessary accreditation.
21. Formal recognition should be structured in a way that both enables people with disability to recognise and select from an accredited workforce, and which recognises and rewards (encourages) those who seek a career path in the sector.
22. Any scheme to formally recognise the disability sector workforce needs to be established in a way that emphasises collaboration between people with disability and their families, the direct support workforce, service providers, and government.
23. In the context of Responsive Regulatory Theory, there is an emerging consensus that the current situation, in which the market place generally sets its own standards, with possibly some minimal oversight by an employing agency (e.g., police checks, reference checks, and supervision), and no nationally accepted industry bench-mark recognition being required, is not satisfactory.
24. Market-based regulation might provide for those situations where people with disability and their families retain staff for basic domestic duties (e.g., cleaning, cooking, shopping, gardening) that they themselves direct. However, this is not considered sufficient to provide the safeguards needed for more complex areas of practice, or where people with disability are limited in their ability to exercise higher levels of direction and self-advocacy.
25. Bearing in mind the need to leverage social capital and good will in the sector, as well as the current complexities of the workforce, there is general endorsement of the need to initially develop at minimum a voluntary accreditation scheme. Such a scheme would provide basic safeguards and recognition of people who were ‘right for the job’.
26. There is support for the development of a more formal register of people who would then be recognised as ‘right for the job’, especially for those who seek to practice in more complex areas of work, or to support people who are limited in their capacity to self-direct or self-advocate, and are consequently recognised as particularly vulnerable to neglect, abuse or malpractice.

27. Any such compulsory register would need to encompass features to accommodate the varying needs of people with disability and their families (including their varying needs for protection against malpractice), and the varying complexities of the tasks involved in direct support activities.
28. A national approach to any such scheme is considered important. A national approach would ensure continuity of standards and procedures across states and territories. It is also noted that the direct support workforce includes a cohort of people who are mobile across states and territories and that it is in the best interests of both workers and people with disability that the scheme is national.
29. Local administration of any scheme is considered important to its effective operations and responsiveness to the needs of both people with disability and the workforce.
30. The administrative structure of any such scheme would need to encompass participation by people with disability and their families, direct support workers, service providers and government.
31. The establishment of any such administrative structure would need to reflect it having status (authority) in the community.
32. The establishment of any such scheme would need to ensure its independence from other existing stakeholder groups (i.e., being constituted in a way that eliminated any potential conflicts of interest).
33. Such a scheme should concern itself with both practical skills and knowledge of the workforce, as well as setting standards of ethical conduct.
34. The cost of establishing any such scheme would need to be met by Government.
35. The cost of maintaining any such scheme might in part be supported by registration fees, but these fees would need to be calculated taking into account the current pay structures in the sector, as well as the preponderance of part-time workers, family careers and volunteers, together with the varying degrees of complexity of task for which people were seeking accreditation to perform.