

NDIS Trial in Victoria Falters on Detail

by Tom Arup, The Age, August 9, 2012

Tensions have again flared between the Baillieu and Gillard governments over the National Disability Insurance Scheme, with a proposed Victorian trial bogged down in a wrangle over details.

The impasse has left carers nervous about whether a Victorian trial due to start mid-next year will get a go-ahead. It would cover 5000 people living with a disability in the Barwon region and around Geelong.

It is believed talks have stuck on sorting out details of how much Victoria now spends for each person with a disability in the region.

The Commonwealth is demanding the state funds \$20,779 for individual care and support packages for each person with a disability under the trial, with both sides still debating whether a \$42 million deal put on the table from Victoria meets that threshold.

The Commonwealth also appears reluctant to agree on Geelong as the site for a National Disability Transition Agency to be set up as part of the insurance scheme, a component of Victoria's trial offer.

Officials from both governments met yesterday to try to break the impasse, with both parties saying the talks had ended on a positive note.

The talks come almost a fortnight after Victoria put its \$42 million trial package on the table following a funding stand-off between the two governments out of a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments last month.

The Commonwealth recently reached a formal agreement with New South Wales for a trial there, despite a similar funding dispute. Trials have also been agreed in South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT.

Premier Ted Baillieu yesterday called on Prime Minister Julia Gillard to confirm the Victorian trial, saying the state's proposal had met the threshold set by the Commonwealth and was consistent with other accepted trials in other states.

"Victoria has offered an additional \$42 million over the period of the trial. This is more than the \$40 million that the Prime Minister publicly proposed for a Victorian trial," Mr Baillieu said.

"There is no valid reason why Prime Minister Gillard cannot now agree to announce a trial for Victoria's Barwon region."

Federal Community Services Minister Jenny Macklin said: "The core question that remains is whether the Victorian government will put money on the table for the costs of care and support for people with disability, in the same way that other states taking part have done."

Daryl Starkey, chief executive of Geelong-based disability services group Karingal, said carers in the region were worried the trial might not go ahead and he was unsure what the hold-up was because the money appeared to be on the table.

LISA Comment: Support packages of \$20,779.00, when a DHS group home service fee is \$123,545.00 per person - figure from Auditor General of Victoria.

The basic intention of NDIS is funding based on personal assessment. It is hard to believe none of the 5,000 would be considered in need of a high support needs Group Home and a five day, Day Service.

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