

Disability Australia (SA)

‘What NDIS does not fix!’

Lack of representation for people with Intellectual Disability on NDIS Advisory Committee is unacceptable

MEDIA RELEASE: July 12th, 2013

DisabilityCare Australia while potentially very good has been over hyped. For a non-budget capped, embryonic program that will not be fully functional until at least 2019 it has created, driven by politicians who need the recognition today, a euphoric aura that leads many to believe that everything is fixed. The truth is that for people with intellectual disability the future is at best still problematic

The Deep-Persistent-Disadvantage report below released Thursday by the Australian Productivity Commission reflects an ugly shadow across the lives of people with disability (see link below)

In particular people with Intellectual Disability who are isolated not by geography or accommodation style but by the very nature of their disability will remain at risk of a lonely life regardless of proposed NDIS funding increases. The Federal Government needs to move quickly to ensure people with intellectual disability have social and community options in life that currently do not exist

On Facebook yesterday disability advocates summarised the situation exposed in this damning report ...

“80% of PWD have not had a visit from friends or family in the last 3 months, according to the Productivity Commission report on "Deep and Persistent Disadvantage in Australia. More than 50% of PWD have not had a phone call in the last 3 months. And 18% have had no social contact with another human in the last 3 months. These are shocking figures, but ones we have known for a long time. The crisis in disability is not about services - it is about social isolation and relationships. Will NDIS address these questions? No it won't. Why won't it?

I think there are three reasons. One is that the voice of PWD comes mainly from people with physical disabilities rather than non-physical disabilities, and for people with physical disabilities who can communicate well, social isolation is not as big an issue as it is for others. For people with physical disabilities the priority is equipment, aids, vehicle modification, and personal support, and these are the priorities for NDIS. I expect some people with physical disabilities will challenge these Productivity Commission figures saying they don't reflect their world, which is exactly the point, since their world is very different from the world of developmental disabilities.

A second is that for service providers, social isolation and lack of relationships are not an issue. Few funding programs are aimed at this, so providers don't do it and governments don't think or talk about it. They basically provide formal services for clients, and whether the clients have friendships and social relationships is really not their core business.

And third, "social inclusion" has basically come to mean "participation in the paid workforce". Labor governments, in particular, think paid work is the be all and end all of a good life. It's not. For many PWD, paid work is not likely in the foreseeable future, so other forms of social inclusion have to be developed, and society will need to be encouraged to not see paid work as the sole criterion for being accepted as a "normal" person. If NDIS cannot address these questions, how can we address them? Well, we need a whole new agenda of transformational change in disability.

<http://www.pc.gov.au/research/staff-working/deep-persistent-disadvantage>

Another vastly experienced and widely respected SA Intellectual Disability Advocate blogged today.

The NDIS has been hi-jacked by those with physical disabilities. It was interesting that at the recent DisabilityCare conference, lots of provisions were made for people with physical and sensory disabilities but nothing for those people with intellectual disabilities. Some of the SA people with intellectual disabilities who attended found it daunting to say the least.

Many people around Australia are concerned how NDIS will work for people with intellectual disabilities”

Disability Speaks is looking for your urgent support to lobby the Federal Government to rectify the situation that currently exists around the NDIS Advisory Committee. Given that between 45-65% of NDIS service consumers will be people with Intellectual Disability or in headcount between 210,000 to 320,00 consumers annually of 460,000 total the lack of equitable representation and significant policy focus on the social inclusion and community network involvement of people with intellectual disability is at danger of being lost in the mad rush to NDIS rollout. The NDIS Advisory committee should include at least 6 people with significant Intellectual Disability exposure including at least three family or carer representatives with genuine experience of caring for people with high level intellectual disability support needs and a focus on developing new and innovative accommodation options that specifically target social networks. If people cannot access transport, local communities or communication mediums they are in grave danger of being left behind in the current NDIS rollout.

Yesterday's Productivity Commission report independently confirms how dire the situation is for people with Intellectual disability.

David Holst

Chair - Disability Speaks Steering Committee & Intellectual Disability Association of S.A (IDASA)

Mob. 0418 555 683

Web. www.disabilityspeaks.com.au

Email. disabilityspeaks@internode.on.net