

## **Submission to the Inquiry into the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the ACT.**

I consider myself very grateful and fortunate to participate in the NDIS. By far I have only experienced minor problems compared with those of other submission entrants' adverse experiences.

I am aware of the problems that the NDIA has confronted such as a lack of training and very little knowledge of mental illnesses and the needs of people who have them. Psychosocial therapies are things that they don't understand all that well; well, at the time of application. Until I read a submission to this Inquiry, I was unaware that I could consider having insurance for the workers who enter my home. I shall look into this as it could be very helpful. I chose not to manage my own NDIS account because the word 'fraud' was used. I definitely did not want to be accused of fraud, so I made arrangements to have a community organisation staff member manage my NDIS account.

I have no family living in the ACT and travel interstate to visit family. With adverse experiences popping up in my life such as the death of my late mother, and a subsequent hospitalisation to the mental ward, a broken leg, a sore arm requiring physiotherapy in 2016 and followed by the other arm requiring treatment since late 2017, I have called on friends for help, as well as the services of health professionals. These health professionals were two psychologists. The NDIS funding that I received paid for one of them. They helped me with my bereavement and broken leg and my experience of pain associated with my back. My spinal condition is permanent but relieved by exercises. Since 1975 I have experienced what some call 'mental illnesses'. Cognitive deficits have placed limitations on certain aspects of my life, such as employment, because my short term memory and learning abilities are restricted. I need time to process information and that time is not always available. I also think, despite friends' protestations, that I have a touch of dementia.

In 2015 my NDIS 'number came up'. I presented medical documents and I was granted some funding to services to include a cleaner, (as I have a back problem when I use the vacuum cleaner), a physiotherapist, a podiatrist, a psychologist, an NDIS support manager and I also sought an art therapist. Serendipitously, I found an art therapist and then the NDIA blocked it. So I approached ADACAS who advocated on my behalf with very simple reasoning! It worked. The advocate argued that the funding from another bucket could pay for the art therapy. I began having Sunday afternoon sessions for two hours. This continued for about two years and then the hours changed to weekday hours. As that did not suit me, I discontinued with the art therapist. I have found another, closer to home, but as she is currently on maternity leave, I await her return to work.

Early in 2015, I had to have new orthoses made and I purchased them. Later in the same year I heard from the NDIS. It was then that I was told that the NDIS could have paid for them! I continue to have the calluses which form on my feet from exercise, pared from my feet by a podiatrist. This service, as much as the others that I receive, is important to me.

I have had three previous cleaners and have one current one. Some of them know what they are expected to do and others always want to be told what to do. Some of them were charging too highly for the NDIS; consequently I lost them. Whilst aggression has been the reason why some participants lose their services, it has not been mine, with one exception. I have learned that respect is the only way to maintain the services of people in your home. Texting an irrelevant message about being civil can be counterproductive. Taking a limited interest in your workers can be beneficial. Since late last year I have had a gardener and it is a great relief handing over responsibility for my garden to someone more able-bodied than myself with relevant knowledge. This entails erecting the

covering of a tree to keep out the cockatoos in spring and obtaining and distributing mulch. I have had no problems with the NDIS regarding my gardener. He works within the NDIS pricing schedule.

In September last year, I had my annual NDIS review. My NDIS support manager thought that the NDIA review staff had little experience in her work. She seemed to me to be working from a pro-forma. She did not fully understand my problems and did not know how to deal with them in terms of services and funding. But, surprisingly, she increased the funding for me. Her other fault was that she did not send me my new plan and unexpectedly went on leave, leaving me in the lurch. About two weeks later I rang and my plan was sent to me by email when she returned, with an apology. But would you believe that the posted copy of my new plan arrived in February this year?!!

With each review I have received more funding than in the previous year. It is distressing to hear of how other participants don't have the funding awarded to them for their very serious problems such as skilled in-home help for severely physically disabled people, and their families who need respite and the lack of services for one reason or another. I can normally take care of myself. I just can't perform in the workforce. I need time to process what I am learning but that time is unallocated in the workplace. The world has left me behind! I am unemployable, especially now that I am retired and accessing my superannuation.

I am very grateful for the funding that the NDIS grants me because I now rely on the DSP only, and in no way could I afford to pay for all the services that I currently receive on the NDIS. At the same time I am mindful that the NDIS pricing schedule to service providers is inadequate and contributes to the 'gig economy'. Lack of financial security for most people in the workforce if they are not 'permanent' workers, is really big in this country, and needs urgently to be addressed and rectified. Many people are suffering great financial hardship. The 'trickle-down effect' does not work. People are worse off than ever before compared with the 1960s.

In the interests of other people with 'mental illnesses', I hope that the Inquiry into the NDIS in the ACT, proves to provide ways for NDIA staff to better understand the issues that such people face. Perhaps staff members should have mandatory psychology qualifications (?).

Thank you for your time and consideration.