

The Convener
Select Committee
Inquiry into the 2009-10 Appropriation Bills
Legislative Assembly
London Circuit
Civic, ACT 2600

INQUIRY INTO THE 2009-10 APPROPRIATION BILLS NDS ACT RESPONSE TO THE 2009-10 ACT BUDGET

NDS ACT is generally supportive of the ACT Budget as handed down on 5 May 2009. While representing only a minimal further investment in disability sector spending, NDS ACT appreciates that the wider context of severe fiscal restraint must be taken into account. As the number of people with need for disability services increases and their support needs change, NDS ACT trusts that the ACT government will ensure that this vulnerable group within our society remains a priority for future investment. Even as a government is forced to move its Budget into deficit, it is important that the ongoing support needs of people with disability must be given sufficient funding.

- Disability and Community Services spending represents \$224.9 million out of \$3,438.4 million in 2009-10, or 6.5% of total expenses.

NDS ACT is keen to see the benefits of planned expenditure maximised through cooperation between government and the community sector. As such, NDS ACT would welcome the opportunity to work with Disability ACT to ensure the ongoing engagement of disability service providers in implementing Budget measures.

NDS ACT recommends that they be included in any governance bodies put in place by government to oversee implementation of Budget measures.

NDS ACT recommends that progress reports on all Budget initiatives be provided by Disability ACT at regular forums with the disability sector.

NDS ACT has been advised that indexation arrangements for disability funding may serve to reduce the negative impact of an economy in decline, through application of GDP indexation rather than WCI. Indexation is an area of great uncertainty and clarity of future arrangements would strongly support planning for effective outcomes.

NDS ACT recommends that future indexation arrangements be clarified and the disability sector consulted as to the impact of this component of funding on future capacity to provide services.

The following specific comments are made in response to the initiatives outlined in the 2009-10 Budget documentation.

Social Housing

NDS ACT has been advised by Disability ACT that all housing built as part of this initiative will be constructed on the principles of universal access, ensuring that all publicly funded accommodation will be developed in such a way as to facilitate access for tenants with disability whether in the present or at some time in the future. NDS ACT welcomes this as a clear indication of the need for consideration of the needs of people with disability as a standard aspect of all capital development. It is hoped that wider State/Territory and National Building Codes will reflect this commitment for wider application to all construction projects.

NDS ACT recommends that action be taken to ensure the wider application of universal access principles in all construction projects through legislative and policy reform around codes and standards.

Canberra CBD Upgrade Program

\$12 million has been set aside for upgrades to the CBD. As the hub for so much of Canberra's transport, employment, recreation and community service activity, it is important that the Civic region be accessible to all Canberrans.

NDS ACT recommends that accessibility considerations be included as a specific component of planning and development for this work.

Reaching Out to the Community

The Budget allows \$1 million over four years for community inclusion spending. NDS ACT has provided input to the work of the Community Inclusion Board, stressing the need for practical results arising from this work.

NDS ACT recommends that their submission to the Community Inclusion Board (attachment A) be considered when progressing initiatives under this Budget measure.

Transition of Individuals from Hospital to the Community

\$3 million over four years is welcomed to assist in the transition of individuals from hospital to the community. Linked to the existing project examining options for young people with disability in residential aged care facilities, this work is critical and NDS ACT welcomes this commitment by government. The flow on effects of this work on Individual Support Packages and other funding will

need to be addressed and NDS ACT expects that this package of work will identify other areas where further investment will be required.

NDS ACT recommends that the government consider putting in place contingency reserve funding to ensure that the findings of this important piece of work can be actioned in due course.

NDS ACT recommends that the government consider using some of this project funding to ensure that individuals currently in hospital are able to be moved into more appropriate care as a matter of urgency.

Companion Card

\$0.4 million over four years to implement a Companion Card will allow the ACT to catch up in an area where it has lagged to date.

NDS ACT recommends that they work with Disability ACT to support service providers and local businesses to identify opportunities for access to services, venues and activities under the Companion Card scheme and that reports on progress be tabled in government quarterly.

Special Care Packages for Extraordinary High Needs

\$1 million recurrent funding over four years and \$0.2 million capital to support Special Care Packages for people with extraordinarily high care needs is welcomed as delivering against Priority 3.4 of the Future Directions document.

NDS ACT sees this as an opportunity to explore innovative design options for accommodation and equipment as well as considering the types of personal care which may be appropriate.

NDS ACT recommends that their input provided to the ACT government on Supported Accommodation (attachment B) be considered in this project.

Louise Gray
ACT Manager
National Disability Services

6 May 2009



Manager
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Chief Minister's Department
ACT Government

**“BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES” FORUM, 4 MARCH 2009
COMMENTS ON THE SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

I refer to your email of 15 April 2009, in which you circulated the outcomes of the recent “Building Inclusive Communities” forum hosted by the Community Inclusion Board.

I attended the forum along with a large number of NDS ACT members and was pleased to see such a strong turn-out for the event. There is clearly a significant commitment to building support models for vulnerable people in the Canberra community which go beyond basic needs and afford importance to social engagement and community inclusion.

It is important that cross sectoral initiatives of this nature lead to practical deliverables which will make a real difference to the community which we serve. As such, NDS ACT would welcome a timetable for reform with key outputs clearly stated. This will ensure that momentum does not slip and that the community is assured of action built on an ongoing model of consultation. Community inclusion must move beyond the realms of motherhood statements.

When attempting to address a broad area of interest such as community inclusiveness, there is a risk that any outcomes will either be too high level as to be relevant in practice or that they will lead to a number of smaller initiatives or working groups which risk losing the sense of cohesion which the initial project intended. A holistic approach to community inclusiveness is one which we should strive for but, in doing so, we need to be aware of the challenges that dealing with issues across a range of client groups, organisations, sectors and levels of government can present. Ongoing evaluation and review, as well as clear attribution of responsibility, can serve to address this.

In addition to stressing the importance of real action building on this work, NDS ACT would like to make the following comments in relation to the document:

- **Improving access to community data** and utilising it to inform future strategies for inclusion is strongly supported. NDS ACT would like to see an audit of data sources and information available to be undertaken and all data and data sources documented and reviewed as to their relevance. This may result in significant streamlining and reduction of effort in this area while also allowing gaps in knowledge to be identified.

- **Professional development of staff in community organisations** has been identified as an important issue and NDS ACT believes that government and the community sector have a shared responsibility to work together to improve the workforce. The work undertaken by the Disability Working Group may prove a useful point for further work in this area and NDS ACT recommends that the Community Inclusion Board refer this issue to the Working Group for specific attention.
- The need for **ongoing engagement between service providers and resource providers** is a point well made. The role of government in brokering such discussions is worthy of further review as government's funding role may place some constraints on their capacity to broker effectively. That said, the need for two way dialogue is essential and NDS ACT would like to see a shift to a funding model which allows for more flexibility in government funding models to respond to community issues as they are raised, even when this falls outside the standard Budget round.
- **Streamlining bureaucracy** for community support groups to allow effective use of resources and provision of assistance with key tasks (such as grant proposals) is a concept which NDS ACT is reviewing in the context of their current project looking at sector sustainability. The recent project undertaken by Communities@Work to investigate the feasibility of shared services may also provide a useful starting point for reviewing the practicalities around progressing such a model in the community sector.
- **Educating the educators** is a theme which NDS ACT has raised in the context of the Review of Special Education, which is currently underway, and it is pleasing to see this consistently coming through in other processes such as this one. The importance of learning and development cannot be under stated. With teachers often the first point of contact for wider engagement in the community, families rely on the school system to provide information on services beyond education. NDS ACT also believes that teachers with access to professional development opportunities in turn influence and educate a much broader section of the community as parents, children and others benefit from their improved knowledge and information base.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this document. I look forward to working with you as we progress this important area of work into a practical framework for action. I can be contacted on 6283 3213 should you wish to discuss any aspects of this paper.

Yours sincerely

[signed]

Louise Gray
ACT Manager
National Disability Services

22 April 2009



National Disability Services - ACT

Supported Accommodation for People with Disability

Futures Paper

Purpose

This paper seeks to identify options for the accommodation of people with disability in the Canberra region and seek government support for future development on this basis.

Background

Many people with disability are among the poorest in the community, relying only on a pension. 80% of people live in subsidised public housing. Some people live alone; others share with as one or two housemates of their choosing. In some cases, people are sharing with as many as five others - not an ideal arrangement. The remainder live with their family, in their own homes or in homes provided by family members.

During much of the Twentieth Century, people with disability lived in large, segregated institutional settings where they were provided with whole of life services. Over more than 30 years, the process of deinstitutionalisation (movement of people from and institutional setting to a community setting) occurred at the urging of individuals and families and was one of the leading policy and structural transformations in health and community services and is now supported by all the major political parties.

- Accommodation has been identified as an issue for further work by Disability ACT, which hosted a forum on 24 February 2009 to discuss issues and options. This paper seeks to inform the work arising from that forum.

Principles

'All people with disabilities achieve what they want to achieve, live how they want to live, and are valued as full and equal members of the ACT community.'

Vision and Values Statement (The Disability Reform Group, endorsed by the ACT Government)

The Australian Disability Service Standards

The Disability Services ACT 1986

The ACT Disability Service Standards

The ACT Disability services ACT 1991

Principles of Good Housing for People with a Disability

The Housing and Tenancy Reform Housing Group 2005

Issues and Approaches

Understanding Need - Who Are We Trying to Support?

A client-centric approach is essential to any supported accommodation framework. Any strategy needs to have the welfare of the individual at the fore - before funding, existing services and other influences are considered.

- Supported accommodation is a long term commitment over the lifetime of the individual. Their needs may change during that time, but the individual themselves must remain the central consideration.

A feasibility study to map out current and future needs is also important if we are to ensure that demand and supply can be appropriately aligned. NDS ACT considers there to be an urgent need for planning around the needs of the following client groups:

- people who will be leaving school;
- people with pronounced medical needs, such as people on pathways from hospital or other health care;
- people with changing needs; and
- the ageing population of people already in supported accommodation.

The current supported accommodation network does not have capacity to support people as they age and options for people with high need are very limited. Further, much of current debate around supported accommodation relates to the needs and choices of

young people. However, consideration of the needs of people already accessing services is critical, too.

- Australia's population with disability is growing older. Supporting people ageing with disability requires cooperative action across governments and across departments because administrative responsibility for aged care and disability services is split.
- Additional support is required when people retire from employment or when their medical needs become more pronounced. Ageing in place is only possible where additional supports can be provided so people with disability are not placed at risk in their own homes.
- Parent carers who are older themselves are uncertain about whether or not there will be adequate support for their family member in the future.

Unmet need is an area which needs some degree of improved understanding, with a focus on identifying vulnerable people, including those people who are kept in hospital for inappropriate lengths of time as no other options exist. Linked to the concept of unmet need is the expected changes in need as parent carers age and seek to find options for their adult children.

- As a key component of the National Disability Agreement reform agenda, NDS ACT understands that work is underway in the ACT government to progress research and analysis around unmet need and projected population changes.

Supported accommodation must be viewed in the context of the end to end interaction of an individual with the service providers and government. Understanding how a person becomes a supported accommodation client in the first place is a key component to understanding how needs are identified and matched with available solutions. Similarly, as a person's needs change over time, their transitional experience if the services and/or accommodation they access and from which providers is also important. Any supported accommodation strategy developed must aim to facilitate access for individuals to the support which best suits their needs.

- Extensive work has been done by disability service providers to understand client needs. There is a wealth of experience as well as a passionate commitment to inform development of a supported accommodation strategy.

What Works?

It is difficult to identify a single model of supported accommodation which represents best practice as the needs of individuals are so diverse. That said, it is clear that what works best is always based on careful consideration of the individual needs of the client and matching of those needs against the best services available. This has led to a range of different models ranging from residential, 24 hour a day care to shared housing for people who have lower care needs and who wish to live in the community.

Flexibility is key. Regulatory frameworks can drive perverse outcomes. A review of policies and standards to ensure that supported accommodation is delivered in a way which allows for the practical operational application of these requirements. For example, there is a need to examine the acceptable use of government owned infrastructure to provide a degree of flexibility to support the operational needs of the service provider.

- For example, the requirement that three bedroom houses must have three occupants limits the capacity for the service provider to utilise the space needed to ensure the efficient running of the house.

When dealing with infrastructure, funding based on individuals can be problematic in terms of budgeting for medium to long term improvements to buildings and fit out. A balance of ISP and block funding allows for a focus on individual need and investment in ongoing infrastructure and enhancements to facilities. At present, the balance is tipped too far in favour of the former with insufficient capacity to manage safe, efficient and effective supported accommodation into the future.

- While ACT Housing will sometimes undertake works on infrastructure but the reality is that any significant enhancements must be budgeted for and funded from other areas of business.

New development of housing for supported accommodation needs to also factor in access to transport, shops and social network opportunities. Social inclusion opportunities for people with disability must remain a priority for ongoing reform in the disability sector.

Risks and Opportunities

Options should be based on the balanced, flexible responses to principles, people, relationships, choice, needs, capacity and funds. Options should seek to make use of existing infrastructure and organisational capacity as well as seek to establish sustainable management and operational frameworks and not lock people into a model.

- Lack of options can lead to “solutions” and models which do not reflect Disability ACT Principles, such as the Community Living Project.

There is no growth in block funding for supported accommodation. The only funding growth comes through those individuals who have been granted Individual Support Package funding. Where infrastructure fails or needs change, there is currently no funding source. As well as putting quality standards at risk, this also reduces choice significantly as providers are forced to match individuals and related funding to suit what is available, even if this may not be what would be ideal for the individual.

- The current funding model can also lead to competition between providers for scarce funds, destabilising the sector.

Current investment in infrastructure under the stimulus package is welcomed, but the pressure to spend funds quickly risks appropriate commitment to the principles of universal access in social housing development. It is timely to review the expenditure of infrastructure funding announced in 2008 to ensure that it is being invested in housing to support people with disability and not becoming diluted as a part of a wider strategy for affordable housing development.

A full assessment of need provides an opportunity for informed planning. As well as identifying unmet need and allowing for projections of growth to inform future development, such an assessment provides an opportunity to ensure that support provided to individuals already accessing support services is appropriate to their needs. For example, under-met need is a driver of perverse outcomes, with people being retained in or pushed to different types of support services to avoid the reality of no supported accommodation services being available.

- There is evidence that some people with disability are kept in employment beyond the period which is suitable, notably in Koomarri, as retiring would place these people at risk of insufficient access to other care and support.

NDS ACT is keen to see active efforts to engage with the wider community and across government departments to manage the supported accommodation needs of people with disability in an efficient and effective way.

- Planning should include an emphasis on assisting people with disability to plan for their retirement through lifestyle coaching and links with other community organisations.

- There also needs to be a holistic recognition of demand for services, including increased demand for additional community supports such as meals on wheels, home help, transportation services and financial management as people age.

Recommendations

NDS ACT recommends that the ACT government consider this paper in the context of establishing a plan for the future management of supported accommodation in the ACT, specifically that:

- a joint reference group be established, including representatives from Disability ACT, ACT Health, ACT Housing, NDS ACT and the disability service sector, to drive reform;
- research into unmet need and projected levels of demand for services be progressed as a matter of priority;
- the needs of people in supported accommodation who are ageing, people leaving school and people transitioning from hospital be considered in the development of any wider strategy;
- a review of infrastructure funding and Individual Support Package funding be undertaken to ensure that funding models drive appropriate quality standards and efficiency.