NDIS Quality and Safeguards Framework

It is essential this Framework comes from the position of a person with a disability. In the current system the focus has been on risk avoidance for service providers and governments and not on achieving the best outcomes for individuals. Everyone is entitled to the dignity of risk. Quality has also been measured in terms of outputs and not in terms of outcomes for people.

A key component of the Productivity Commissions finding was that a focus needs to be put on developing the mainstream communities understanding of the issues relating to people with a disability. Australian society needs to move away from a position of labelling people around “disability” and “ mental health” etc to one of considering every member of equal value and supporting them as such. If money isn’t put into changing the current scenario then no matter the quality measures and safeguards put in place people with disabilities will never be truly safeguarded. This will mean an ongoing emphasis will need to be put on specific measures which would not be necessary in a truly well educated, integrated society. It is crucial the NDIS doesn’t create another silo into which to place people with a disability.

Giving a person strong advocacy abilities, either their own or via another person, is the best safeguard and way to achieve a quality outcome. Having this person connected well to their community adds a further level of safe guarding. The NDIS needs to have a very strong focus on developing these outcomes.

There are a number of formal systems which will contribute to safeguarding but no doubt many other submissions will cover these. One other area I do wish to cover though is training for paid support staff. This training needs to be in developing the characteristics that are valued by people with disabilities in the staff who support them. This goes well beyond the technical skills needed to do the work. It is essential pricing within the NDIS allows providers to have the resources to train their staff. Currently this is not the case and it is disingenuous for the NDIA to talk about giving people with disabilities a quality and safe service if this is not addressed.

Safeguarding is much more than a structure of policies and procedures. The best safeguard comes from people with disabilities being surrounded by people who care about them and have a relationship with them. This should be crucial outcome from a successful NDIS.