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Re: Submission for Review of the National Disability Advocacy Program

To Whom It May Concern,

As a mother of a person with disability who is currently supported by advocacy, please find attached answers to relevant questions of the NDAP review.

1.1

I agree with the sentiment that the focus should not be on models of advocacy but on the human rights of the person with disability and their individual needs. The most appropriate model is whichever best supports the individual person and their individual level of care.

1.2

Multiple models of advocacy can lead to fragmentation of service provision, confusion of message and ultimately suboptimal outcomes for individuals with disability. It is my belief that in this circumstance, less may be more.

1.3

At a high level, to ensure equitable access, advocacy must remain a publicly funded provision in order for all people with disability to be able to access those services. Adequate funding to advocacy, regardless of model is a prerequisite for services to continue. In the example of my own son, Action for People With Disability have provided immeasurable amounts of support for him (and myself) but I am now concerned to have found out that this advocacy's funding will not be continued past June 2018. This will therefore impact on his human rights to equitable access to advocacy.

2.1

Improving access to advocacy must begin with adequate funding for provision and then furthermore education of advocates. Education allows individuals a better understanding of the skills required to engage with sociodemographically diverse communities.

3.1/3.2

Reporting and auditing of these reports by independent third parties is an important part of the consultation process to allow dissemination of systemic issues into the community. An important part of reporting is ease of access to reporting systems which could be facilitated by investment into developing appropriate ICT systems. An important part of these systems is cross communication between various governmental and non-governmental agencies. Although it is of great concern to

me as a mother of a person with a disability, with the dissolution of ADHC to progress to the NDIS, that there seems to be no central body who is now ultimately responsible for overseeing the quality of care provision by NGO service providers. Even if there were perfect reporting and auditing systems in place, if there is no body to mediate concerns, then these systems are futile. I am aware that the Ombudsman has been given this role, but I also believe that as a watchdog, their power to implement change is minimal.

4.1

As noted above, appropriate reporting systems need to be in place. Any conflicts of interest that are recorded should be audited and modified if required. This although requires a central governing body, which as far as I'm aware, will not exist. So this is a concern for me as a mother of a person with disability.

4.2

If advocates are free from conflicts of interest, then by definition their role is to identify gaps in supports provided and to advocate to the NDIS on behalf of their client to close these gaps. This then refers to my answer to 4.1, in that advocacy should be independent and free from conflicts in order to be effective.

Kind Regards,

Serena Marinucci