

16 September 2019

The Hon Stuart Roberts MP
Minister for National Disability Insurance Scheme,
Minister for Government Services
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Roberts,

RE: NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME.

I write to you in particular about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and ask as the responsible Minister, why I at 74 years of age am ineligible to receive supports from the NDIS for my long-term spinal injury, please?

As a quadriplegic since 1961, I and my family have always personally funded my own cost of disability with little or no financial assistance from government to offset these costs. Although my cost of disability is quite a personal financial burden, if I had access to supports from the NDIS, this would help me survive! As a self-funded retiree on a small superannuation pension I have to be very careful to save. And yet, now having to reside in [REDACTED] Nursing Home, that precludes me from accessing either the Commonwealth Home Support Program or the National Disability Insurance Scheme – why? Especially as it relates to my disability and mobility equipment, together with replacement parts and service!

The following sets out in my case, that the exclusion from NDIS is based solely on the grounds of age, e.g. I am over 65 years of age and does that suggest it is discrimination?

On the basis of that and having experienced recently my power wheelchair faltering and because of that situation it needed to be replaced. During which it became a nightmare to get funding to replace my power wheelchair. The attached list of researched organisations seeking the \$21,814 funding, further demonstrates the difficulty people in nursing homes face, trying to get financial assistance to fund high-end mobility equipment.

Starting with My Age Care looking for options of possible financial assistance, they advised that once in a nursing home, the responsibility shifts to the owner of the nursing home to fund resident's disability and mobility equipment. While that may be the preferred option of the Coalition Government, these owners fail to fund high-end disability power wheelchairs and flatly refuse to consider such expensive equipment, outright!

Having tested this with [REDACTED], their response was to only fund either a transit or self-propelling wheelchair. Neither are appropriate if one cannot self-propel, and if accepted I would need to rely upon staff to move me about, but only inside their building, a practice that would significantly curtail, in my situation and my independence! However, they did offer me the choice to drawdown some of my own Refundable Accommodation Deposit (RAD) and if I accepted, it came with a condition that ensures I repay them for the lost

investment income on my RAD! That repayment was initially \$3.56 a day each month and has risen to \$5.56 a day now each month.

With this financial assistance that also needs to be repaid, I purchased a new power wheelchair that cost \$21,814. To achieve this, I borrowed \$22,000 from my RAD as a drawdown and paid \$12,585 cash from those funds to the wheelchair supplier. I also received a \$1,000 Grant from Spinal Cord Injuries Australia and a special purpose Grant from the Commonwealth Home Support Program approved by the ACT Health Minister, as a one-off \$8,272 financial assistance grant toward my new power wheelchair.

As a self-funded retiree, I struggle to pay my way each month at [REDACTED] costing \$2,700 a month and I pay \$750 a month for my Wife's accommodation at the Retirement Village in [REDACTED]. Again, I also take about \$1,600 a month from my RAD, just to ensure I can pay for my high-care accommodation at [REDACTED] each month and that further increases the amount I need to repay to [REDACTED] owners to re-establish my \$470,000 RAD.

Unfortunately, my wife is currently in remission with terminal cancer and her inability as my primary carer to care for me, means we are also separated as a family, after 50 years of marriage.

Why is it also that no Federal Government Financial Support Programs exist for disability equipment for nursing home residents?

On the basis of the above Minister, I would like to know why I am ineligible for inclusion in the NDIS?

Yours sincerely