

National Disability Strategy  
Position Paper  
July 2020

Senator the Hon Anne Ruston,  
Minister for Families and Social Services

Dear Senator Ruston,

The following is brief comment by Tony & Heather Tregale on the “Position Paper”, as it was received close to the deadline.

Our background is that our youngest son has an intellectual disability and autism for which we did extensive behaviour management, especially in his early years. But since the time we reluctantly decided we were getting no younger to continue providing 24/7 care, he has been living in a DHHS group home, which has been mainly poor and for which we have extensive evidence. And, there is little sign care level will be any different within the move to NDIS plan funding. Further, we were Community Visitors for six years, and Heather got her CERT4 qualification and worked undercover in group homes and day service for four years sadly discovering just awful it was for clients behind the closed doors of many of these services.

### **Overview:**

The paper, as with the NDIS, focuses mainly on those with moderate to high ability, living independently in the community.

There were four major seminars following the NDIS moving into Victoria proper from the Barwon trial sites. At not one of these seminars were people living in group homes mentioned

- *Collaboration and engagement with people with disability, their families and advocacy organisations will be at the heart of the new Strategy.*

**Well it is certainly not so now in respect to group homes. Staff consider it is their workplace and residents and families are a disruption**

- *the Senate Inquiry report into the delivery of outcomes under the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 to build inclusive and accessible communities (2017)*

**We would consider this as very much wishful thinking, as usual!**

- *Broad consultation on developing the new Strategy was undertaken in the first half of 2019 with key stakeholders, including people with disability, their families and*

*carers, the disability sector, advocates and service providers*

**We saw little publicity for this!**

- *In addition, since the last Strategy was introduced, service and support systems for people with disability have changed significantly with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and disability reform across all levels of government. The NDIS provides funding to support individuals with permanent and significant disability, which is approximately 10-15 per cent of all people with disability. This is a world leading program and a significant investment by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments, which will continue to be a key action area under the new Strategy.*

Yes, but the NDIS is focused mainly on those with moderate to high ability living independently in the community.

- *In particular, a greater focus on accountability and implementation of policies and programs that will improve outcomes for people with disability.*

**Support service level and quality accountability and implementation are major factors lacking behind the closed doors of group homes and day services,**

- *The new Strategy is intended to be an aspirational, living document with long-term plans, indicators and measures that are relevant across the life of the Strategy. The new Strategy is the key mechanism for engaging all parties to commit to the continued systemic reform of disability policy in Australia.*

**This has been bureaucratic talk since time immemorial. There is an overwhelming need to set, monitor and maintain direct care staff work value expectations to ensure support services are well within the intentions of care policies, standards and values – rather than the provision of mindercare.**

- *It provides an over-arching coordinated approach to achieving outcomes from programs, policies and initiatives.*

**Only if service provider management maintain direct care staff work value expectations to ensure support services are well within the intentions of care policies, standards and values – rather than the provision of mindercare.**

- *This consultation process will be guided by the principles of meaningful engagement as it seeks to hear the voices of people with disability.*

**The voices of people with disabilities are mostly just those with communication ability who believe they are speaking for all with**

disabilities.

- *It will be accountable in that any outcomes for people with disability should be measurable and reported on.*

Sounds good, but in practice is mostly very academic

- *Feedback is sought on the architecture of the new Strategy and ideas on how the new Strategy can deliver better outcomes for all people with disability.*

By firm, effective and dedicated provider management ensuring meaningful support services are being consistently provided at service points. And, that there are effective complaints processes where people with disabilities and their stakeholders are not expected to prove their concerns beyond reasonable doubt, sufficient to stand up in the supreme court. Rather, the service provider be expected and obligated to prove to the consumer the support is being provided as intended.

- *An inclusive Australian society that enables people with disability to fulfil their potential as equal members of the community.*

But not people with intellectual and multiple disabilities who live in group homes

- *Personal and community support : Learning and skills*

Certainly not those in group homes, where most of the care is little more than mindercare!

- *There is a widespread understanding of the need to ensure people with disability are able to fully participate in society*

Certainly, but those in group homes are rarely considered!

- *All levels of government (Commonwealth, state and territory, and local governments), and all sectors of the community, share the responsibility to work together to remove barriers and shape attitudes so that people with disability can fully participate as equal members of the community. A key focus of the new Strategy will be to facilitate and foster ongoing attitudinal change so that we harness the rich contribution that people with disability make to our society*

We see this applying to just those with medium to high ability. Those at the other end of the range are generally put in the too hard basket .

- *The new Strategy will also seek to clarify the important role of the sectors outside government in improving outcomes for people with disability.*

That is if service provider management and staff are not permitted ensure their work practices are orientated for their benefit rather than the consumer.

- *Outline the important role of the non-government sector in improving outcomes for people with disability.*

Not like the five NGOs who are in the process of taking over DHHS group homes in Victoria, who are forced by DHHS to use seconded DHHS management and staff for a considerable period. As well as the DHHS use of a bilateral agreement to maintain in-kind funding for over four years after their group home residents became NDIS participants.

- *One of the main objectives of the new Strategy is to have a real impact on improving the lives of people with a disability.*

There has been many reviews and inquiries but people with disabilities, especially those living in group homes, remain second class citizens in comparison with service provider staff.

- *Measuring outcomes for people with disability in key areas of their lives – such as employment, housing, health and education – will help track progress over time to determine whether the lives of people with disability are improving*

In contrast, there is little consideration given to those with high support needs!

*The new Strategy will include an outcomes framework as a mechanism to hold governments and service providers to account for the outcomes being achieved by programs and services they are delivering to people with disability. To do this, the mechanism will articulate outcomes, indicators and measures to track change over time.*

The NDIS is the first time accountability factors such as a “Roster of Care (ROC) and a Service Agreement has been employed within support services. Yet service providers are already nullifying these .

- *Various reviews and consultation feedback have highlighted concerns about the current approach to reporting, noting it has been ineffective in ensuring action or accountability.*

Disability service provision and regulation remain front and centre. People with disabilities and their stakeholders are rarely considered creditable in comparison.

- *Previous reviews and consultation on the current Strategy have posed different views around the frequency of reporting. For example, the Productivity Commission recommended that a National Disability Report be tabled in Parliament every two years. During the first stage of consultation on the new Strategy, stakeholders favoured annual reporting. There have also been suggestions for a staggered reporting process.*

**These reporting processes generally collect dust between reviews. There is so much money wasted on bureaucracy!**

- *The new Strategy will contain a commitment to collecting relevant data to enable effective monitoring and reporting and to drive change.*

**This has been said many, many times before, but is defeated by service providers, regulators and bureaucrats.**

- *The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Australian Data and Digital Council agreed to establish a National Disability Data Asset (NDDA), which, once developed, will help inform service choices by people with disability and their carers. The NDDA will bring together, for the first time, de-identified Commonwealth and services data, NDIS data, and service system data from states and territories. The integrated and shared data will provide a better understanding of how people with disability are supported through services, payments and programs across multiple service systems.*

**Again, there is so much money wasted on bureaucracy which achieves little at service points!**

- *The development of policy and programs under the new Strategy can be assisted by a stronger approach to implementation.*

**Again, implementation of good care, programs and practices is difficult to achieve in practice. Most especially behind the closed doors of group homes and day services, where tradition is often mindercare.**

- *It is proposed that the new Strategy include an Engagement Plan that articulates governments' commitment to ensure that people with disability can actively participate in shaping future disability policies, programs and services.*

**Fine! But the representatives of those who cannot represent themselves should be included, as these are usually represented by those people with disabilities totally different.**

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