



Summary – The NSW Government response to the Productivity Commission Disability Care and Support draft report

The NSW Government has released its response to the draft report of the Productivity Commission Disability Care and Support Inquiry.

The NSW Government response supports, in principle, the proposed National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and National Injury Insurance Scheme (NIIS), and confirms the NSW Government's support for a disability system in which people with a disability, their families and carers are at the centre. It also recommends the Hunter Region as the proposed trial region for the NDIS.

In its response to the Draft Report the Government makes several recommendations that are particularly pertinent to carers in NSW. These include:

- The NDIS must be open to all people with a disability and support all current service users to at least their current level of service. It must provide the full range of supports that people with a disability require without substituting for mainstream services
- The NDIS must include people with a disability who are currently receiving a low-level support that enables them to participate in employment and to access their community.
- Carer Support Centres should be established under the National Carer Framework and not be established under the aged care system
- An issue will be how 'reasonably and willingly' will be defined and assessed.* People may be less willing to support a family member with a disability if they think that they are able to 'opt out' of caring and have all supports provided by the NDIS. This assessment needs to also consider the cost benefit of 'reasonably and willing' particularly where this comes at the expense of the carer's capacity to engage in employment or other appropriate community activities.
- Including the capacity for accessing carer services within the individual package of the person they are caring for is supported in principal, provided that the part of the package dedicated to meeting assessed carer needs is quarantined and protected for that purpose, in order to avoid being absorbed into the support needs of the individual. NSW supports assessing best methods of supporting carers.

*The draft report proposes that assessment would consider what "reasonably and willingly could be provided by unpaid family carers and the community."

Some of the recommendations of the NSW Government concur with the recommendations made by Carers NSW and Carers Australia in their responses to the Draft Report. These include:

- Carer Support Centres should have the ability to support all carers, including those caring for people who have a disability or are ageing, as well as those caring for people with mental illness, chronic illness and drug and alcohol dependencies.
- The Carer Payment is provided as income support and, as such, covers a range of expenses to do with living and maintaining a household. Likewise, the stated purpose of the Child Disability Assistance Payment and the Carer Supplement is to assist carers with the costs of caring. Although they enable the carer to care, they are not explicitly about paying for the care needs of the person with a disability.
- The NDIS should be responsive to an individual's request to be reassessed if they, *or their carer's*, circumstances change.
- The Charter also recognises that carers will have individual needs, both within and outside of their caring role. Any assessment should be a genuine reflection of those needs and not just of the carer's ability to sustain their caring role.
- The availability and provision of training and counselling is important in improving client and carer outcomes and reducing support costs
- Strategies which support carers' involvement in the workforce and provide economic and social benefits are warranted. This is in keeping with the NSW Carers Charter, which states that carers should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians. The ability to work is an important option for carers as it has the potential to reduce financial strain and social isolation.