



16 August 2010

Productivity Commission
Disability Care and Support Public Inquiry
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

Email: disability-support@pc.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

CPSU Submission to the Disability Care and Support Public Inquiry

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Productivity Commission's inquiry on a long term disability and care support scheme.

The PSU Group of the CPSU represents workers in the Australian Public Service, the ACT and Northern Territory Public Services, the telecommunications sector, call centres, employment services and broadcasting. We are a national union with members in every state and territory. Our members work in the areas of administration, sales, engineering, communications, information technology, legal, technical, scientific research, broadcasting and many other fields. We are the principle union covering Centrelink, CRS Australia, the Department of Health and Ageing and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

As part of delivering our *Agenda for Change*, we are committed to working with Government to develop programs that enhance employment opportunities for workers with disabilities.

The CPSU supports, in principle, the introduction of a long-term disability support and care scheme. CPSU members have suggested a number of principles that could shape a disability care and support scheme. These include:

- A wide eligibility criteria, with coverage according to need;
- Individualised person centred funding determined by level of need and taking into account barriers to participation and the extent of formal support available;
- Building on eligibility for existing entitlements to avoid overlapping and duplication; and
- A 'cost of disability' allowance being included.

Beyond these principles, CPSU members raised a number of specific issues of concern that must be taken into account in the development and implementation of any new scheme.

Assessment of eligibility

According to the terms of reference, the Inquiry will examine *how eligibility would be assessed, how often and who by* and *whether there should be a means test of eligibility?* The potential impact on workload and the quality of services already provided by agencies such as CRS Australia and Centrelink must be considered when examining eligibility assessments. Any increased

workload or additional responsibilities to the relevant agency must be accompanied by proper resourcing.

Governance

The governance of scheme (probity and accountability, data collection, financing, planning, gatekeeper, claims management) and what government agencies/Departments will have which responsibilities are key concerns for the CPSU. The scheme's governance should be managed by existing agencies where appropriate with additional resourcing to meet any new responsibilities and higher workloads. Decision making powers, agency/service provider responsibilities, guidelines and accountability measures for the scheme must be determined in consultation with the public servants who will be responsible for managing the scheme to ensure it operate in an effective manner.

Funding

The current system of disability support is inadequately resourced. Additional funding for disability support and care is essential. The CPSU is interested in the potential impact of a new funding model on the provision of services by public sector. The public sector should be at the centre of any funding model as it is best placed to manage and provide the quality services to those individuals who need it. A new funding model should appropriately increase the level of resourcing to relevant Departments and agencies such as Centrelink and CRS Australia to ensure the quality of existing services does not decline with an increased workload and new responsibilities.

Workforce

Workforce development must be a fundamental part of a scheme to improve services provided to individuals with a disability. Employees must be provided with adequate training to be able to properly implement any changes and understand how they are connected with other relevant government programs to ensure that a quality service is provided to people requiring disability support.

Additionally, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) plays a leading role in developing policies regarding the health workforce capacity for the disability sector. The CPSU is interested in finding how a long term disability and care support scheme would impact upon the existing role of DOHA in developing health workforce policy? Would responsibilities change? How would the workload of staff change? Would there be additional resourcing and staffing?

Coexistence with other schemes

It is currently unclear how a scheme will interact with other existing entitlements to compensation and rehabilitation. More clarity and consultation is required to determine how it will co-exist with existing compensation and rehabilitation schemes to ensure that existing entitlements are not undermined.

Should you wish to discuss this submission any further the contact person is Osmond Chiu, osmond.chiu@cpsu.org.au, on (02) 6220 9655.

Yours sincerely



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