



30 January 2017

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme
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Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Sir or Madam,

NDIS inquiry into provision of hearing services

On behalf of Able Australia I would like to submit this letter of support to a submission that Senses Australia has provided to the "Inquiry into the provision of hearing services under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)."

Able Australia is the leading national comprehensive services provider for people who are Deafblind with a significant focus on the eastern regions of Australia. The services include;

- Support coordination (formerly called case management)
- Ablelink (e-communication centre)
- Creative Arts therapy
- Recreation program
- Annual camps
- Training to the community about deafblind awareness and deafblind communication
- Counselling and other related allied health service
- 1:1 outreach program (communication guides) providing 1:1 support to people who are deafblind who live independently but require this services to maintain their daily living activities.
- Community Development Workers program based in Brisbane, QLD, Sydney, NSW and Adelaide, SA providing information and limited services.

This submission provides many evidence-based information and references regarding deafblindness, which mirror our experiences. The incidence of deafblind people is low, however their needs are unique and significant and cannot be "comparable" to other people with disabilities. Deafblindness is a dual sensory disability and there are a wide range of communication methods that are not seen in the mainstreamed disability groups. Some deafblind people also have additional disabilities (e.g.; CHARGE, intellectual and or physical) which further illustrates their significant service and support needs.

Able Australia fully supports the recommendations by Senses with whom we collaborate closely. Our collaborations are not only with Senses, but also with the Deafblind Australia and the deafblind community members. One of the recommendations (number 7), we would like to expand to include:



312 hours is quite limiting in its own right. As access is never easy to setup and or complete, on average by the time you take into account more activities for participants, 6 hrs per week is churned through in 3 hours of travel – leaving only 3 hours to actually participant in an activity.

Able Australia recommends that all deafblind participants be educated to understand how to capitalise and build their core supports to a minimum of 15 hrs per week. This allows for any public transport support, 1:1 time and most importantly no stress on time management across the 7 day week.

We believe based on our extensive experience over the last 50 years as a service provider to deafblind people, 720 hours per year should be the minimum support time from a skilled deafblind communication guide. With this support, people with deafblindness would be able to more easily and regularly participate in community life, enjoy better opportunities to develop skills, gain knowledge and information and become much more empowered.

Another area of further exploration is the recommendation (10) which focuses on e communication training. Through Ablelink over the past 20 years, it has been established by having a community "drop in centre" for people with deafblindness has not only strengthened closer ties to the Melbourne city Council and deafblind community but a place of "belongingness and ownership". It has become apparent that through Ablelink, many participants have developed a greater understanding of financial digital literacy as well as increased access to information through social networks.

Able Australia and other relevant organisation providing services to people who are deafblind are looking forward to working closely with NDIS framework to ensure that positive changes can be made for greater participation in their local, state and national communities.

If you require any other information or have any questions, we are more than happy to discuss further with you.

Kind regards

Kaye Collard
Chief Executive Officer