

TRANSPORT COSTS FOR HUNTER DISABLED UNDER NDIS

I am representing my disabled daughter Katherine Hawker who attends Community Programs at Endeavour Group in Maitland 4 days per week, and many others in this region who will be affected adversely regarding transport costs under the NDIS as well.

Under NDIS, there are many positives for the disabled however I feel there is a glitch concerning funding for transport, particularly for the disabled in regional areas.

In our case disabled clients unable to travel independently are transported from home in the morning to programs at the centre and return in the afternoon by Endeavour Group as our service provider, having block funding through ADHC to cover their staffing costs and with the client's mobility allowance covering costs as well. With NDIS, service providers will now only receive funds to cover the hourly staff costs required for their client's programs with no funds provided to them to cover the extra staffing costs of actually transporting them to and fro. The client's mobility allowances aren't enough (in our case \$94 per fortnight/\$2444 per annum) to cover costs. I understand there are 3 tiers for transport allowance under NDIS (local, rural and remote). In our case we would probably fall into the second level which will be approximately \$2444 per year and replaces her Mobility Allowance.

In our case Katherine is totally unable to take public transport herself, so what will be the cost to her for a taxi for the 60km odd return trip from Branxton to Maitland and return 4 days per week. For me to drive her there and back home and again in the afternoon I am looking at 120km each day. It has been mentioned that providers could charge up to 70c per km for transport. That would cost (120km x 200 days p/a = \$24000 p/a). Other advice is that service providers and participants and their families come up with a solution themselves such as forming a transport co-op.

This means that Katherine and others like her in our regional area have great funding for a great service, which enriches their lives and allows them to make a social contribution, but without a way to get there. As long as people don't

lose existing services which are so important to them, all is well, but removing safe transport for people with disabilities is a big negative.

Not all people with a disability have the capability for independent travel and the NDIS does not allow for that fact, and the difficulty for these disabled clients finding their own transport from non-public transport routes, even if they were capable of doing it themselves is totally unreasonable, and often unwell or ageing parents are unable to travel hours per day transporting their child.

It could be said that the current argument by providers for transport costs to be funded suits their agenda, however behind the providers are the disabled and their families whose lives will genuinely be changed for the worse.

A key principle underpinning the design of the NDIS is to give Australians with a disability a greater choice and control over the supports and services they receive to achieve their goals, become as independent as possible, develop skills for day-to-day living and participate in the community.

In practice this means providing support, as and if required in areas including MOBILITY, and among other things learning, social and economic participation.

It also says in developing and individual NDIS plan to consider all day to day activities and the aids, equipment and/or support that would make life easier, whether currently provided or not as long as it is reasonable and necessary to achieve their life goals and aspirations and participate in the community to the fullest extent possible.

Surely allowing transport costs to be included in NDIS packages for individuals unable to travel independently fulfils the key principle.

I feel we should at least be able to include the staffing costs involved in the transport to be paid from our NDIS packages. Say 1 hour morning, 1 hour afternoon per day. It is not unreasonable a request when it is in fact able to be covered under our existing ADHC packages.