



Provision of Services under the NDIS Early Childhood Early Intervention Approach

Can:Do Group submission to the Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

August 2017





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About the Can:Do Group

Can:Do Group is the umbrella organisation that encompasses South Australia's two oldest charitable service providers, Can:Do 4Kids, Townsend House and Deaf Can:Do, The Royal South Australian Deaf Society.

The Can:Do Group also incorporates Can:Do Hearing, an audiology business whose profits directly contribute to Can:Do 4Kids and Deaf Can:Do services.

With over 140 years of experience, we are the leading experts in specialist services for people with hearing and vision impairments in South Australia, - and each year we touch the lives of over 20,000 people.

Can:Do 4Kids, Townsend House, is South Australia's oldest charitable service provider, offering vital therapy and support to children and young people who are blind, deaf or have vision, hearing or sensory impairments and their families.

Established in 1874 by William Townsend as a school and accommodation for deaf and blind children, Townsend House has provided family-centred support for over 140 years.

Deaf Can:Do, The Royal South Australian Deaf Society, delivers vital services and support to Deaf and Hard of Hearing South Australians.

Established in 1891 by Townsend House Superintendent Samuel Johnson as the Deaf and Dumb Mission, Deaf Can:Do is South Australia's second oldest registered charitable service provider. Throughout the years, our services have evolved to meet the ever-changing needs of the South Australian Deaf community.

Our work aims to alleviate isolation and equip people who are Deaf and hard of hearing with the assistance, knowledge and confidence to live independently and contribute to the community.

About this submission

The Can:Do Group, and in particular Can:Do 4Kids, Townsend House, have been delivering services under NDIS since the inception of the children's services trial site in South Australia in July 2013.

In our implementation of these services we have developed significant experience and expertise in NDIS service delivery. We have provided NDIS claimable services to nearly 500 children over the last four years.

We would value the opportunity to present further to the committee in order to share our experiences, and help shape a robust system for the future of our services and the improvement of outcomes for all Australians living with a disability.



Response

We would like to commence this submission by stating that we applaud the NDIA for seeking to achieve the best outcomes for children and their families via the Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) approach. As a four year participant of the NDIS we have supported many families through the changes and have watched them, and their children flourish in many ways not before possible. As an organisation we, too, have been able to increase our service offerings and expand our client base.

Our primary reason for responding to this inquiry is to highlight that the ECEI approach has not rolled out in South Australia as intended and as it has been in other states. The commitment to deliver the best outcomes for young children and their families does not appear to be moving forward in this state. In fact, we have noted that the experience for many of our current clients has been one of chaos, repeatedly telling their story and lack of coordinated support.

We have learned that the original tender was not applied for by any South Australian based organisation and given the number of us with years of experience in this space that is unfortunate. We have reflected on our thoughts regarding why this did not happen and we put them to the committee:

1. NDIA required an entire state tenderer and this role has not previously been in place in SA (unlike other states).
2. To submit a tender it was required that you not already be providing paediatric services under NDIS, yet as we were the paediatric trial site so anyone involved in this space was providing services already.
3. All children in our state had already been on-boarded into NDIS so if you were successful in the tender the first few years of operation would be limited to reviews with limited new clients.
4. The tender application was cumbersome for smaller state based organisations to conquer without significant resource investment

Given all of the above, there was no acknowledgement that the NDIA could have taken a different route in this state; and now we are faced with a lack of clarity around what to expect of the Access Partner and what continues to happen internally by NDIA staff, as well as when and how to access all services. In SA the priorities for this partner are unclear to us and we also feel that there has been a lack of transparency in knowing what the future plans are for this role. Note that we are one of two states without a partner listed on the NDIS website so the expectation that participants will self-refer is not possible.

Unlike other states South Australia never had a coordinated early intervention service state-wide. This made the concept of an ECEI partner more difficult for some of us to imagine. We would request that the NDIA works collaboratively with South Australian Service Providers in an open and transparent manner to find a solution for SA.