

Senators & Members

In reference to the Terms of Reference of your current inquiry, I would like to address a fundamental neglect which is occurring by forcing people with a disability onto the Aged Care system, i.e. because they are not eligible for assistance under the NDIS.

Points I will address are as follows:

- People with a disability may have had the disability, complete and unrecoverable, since birth, through illness or an accident throughout their lifetime, and some may have been disabled for many years;
- Many people with a physical disability are reliant on equipment to get through their day and live a normal, income generating life;
- Most people with a significant physical disability will never recover and so for the rest of their lives they will require equipment and aids to live a fruitful existence;
- Coverage for support for equipment can only be found under the NDIS, Aged Cared does not provide support for equipment such as wheelchairs for physically disabled non-walkers;
- NDIS support does not cover someone over the age of 65.

As a wife, friend and advocate for several people with a disability I offer my submission. I would like to outline the great difficulty and frustration these people, who have lived most of their lives with their disability, are facing since they are no longer considered disabled but Aged.

Within this group of people, we have people who worked within the Australian Public Service or in small business for 40 or more years each and set themselves up so they could afford to pay for themselves all through life, never asking for assistance from the government. Some of them require electric wheelchairs due to a spinal injury which was caused a long time ago (I am talking in some cases 50 + years ago) by accident, but at that time these people did not receive the compensation or assistance people today receive.

Others contracted polio after migrating to Australia post WW2 in the migrant camps they were forced into and where the epidemic hit the hardest. Some have transformed from polio impact to spinal injury due to an accident in later years of their life.

To live a meaningful and fruitful life they all need equipment, otherwise they cannot get out of bed, have a shower, go to the bathroom or do everyday things like everyone else. Most of them are now over 70 which means when NDIS commenced some were already over 65, whilst some missed out because they were still working and not requiring care or assistance at that time. These people are quite vulnerable, because at this time in their life they get disheartened very easily when they cannot live a 'normal' everyday life. People who have been fighters all their life to enable themselves to become useful citizens, suddenly become

downtrodden and 'blue' and give up on life, feeling worthless and useless.

The Aged Care system is not suitable for people with a disability, as they do not provide the ability for a person to purchase a wheelchair or much other useful equipment, and if you have assets you are expected to contribute, much of the time more than half. Some of these people do not have the funds to contribute, but mostly the issue is not whether you have the funds, they do not provide equipment.

The NDIS was supposedly set up to assist people with significant and profound disabilities live life to the fullest possibility. Due to the restriction to 65 years of age, these people have fallen through the cracks and are now getting treated like 'old' people and are only offered services to clean and cook and garden. They don't need this they need assistance so they can do those things themselves.

People are desperately fighting with Aged Care to even get an ACAT assessment because they must go on the list and wait for an assessment, and then to get a Home Care Package the wait could be 12 months before they get one. Still there is no equipment, and they need to scrimp and save on their package to save money to purchase a new wheelchair over many years. A manual wheelchair can cost anywhere from \$5,000 upwards and an electric wheelchair starts at around \$20,000.

The Terms of Reference of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability say:

RECOGNISING that people with disability are equal citizens and have the right to the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including respect for their inherent dignity and individual autonomy.

[\(Letters Patent signed \[PDF 2MB\]\)](#)

They have also provided a definition of neglect:

Neglect

*Neglect includes physical and emotional neglect, passive neglect and wilful deprivation. Neglect can be a single significant incident or a systemic issue that involves depriving a person with disability of the **basic necessities of life** such as food, drink, shelter, **access, mobility, clothing, education, medical care and treatment.** (Without mobility they cannot seek medical care or treatment).*

So, why is it that people who are 65 suddenly become not disabled, but Aged? Someone needs to address this inequity and neglect of older people needing equipment to live out the golden years in comfort and dignity.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards Denise Rambow