



PARLIAMENTARY JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Reference No: SQ17-000176

Topic: Medical reports and prosthetic device

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Question

CHAIR: Can I come back to a specific then. Another matter in which we had evidence was in relation to when and how medical reports are used. I recall an example where a plan did not provide for a prosthetic device though it had been recommended by a medical practitioner for this particular participant. As a general proposition, if there are medical reports in relation to participants, that should at least be part of the basis of evidence that you take into consideration for that particular individual. I know it is not everything, but it is certainly one piece of evidence that should be taken into account. I know that not every case is indicative of the way in which the scheme operates overall. Nonetheless, these are matters that have been raised with us.

Ms Gunn: You're right, information from medical practitioners is really important in understanding the diagnosis level. Underneath that, we then have to understand the functional impact of the diagnoses. We sometimes struggle to get that information clearly documented and understood. But I am not sure why a plan missed having a prosthesis. If a person needs a prosthesis, it is very obvious. I would imagine that that was just an error in the plan construction rather than a failure to look at the piece of evidence.

Senator SIEWERT: In this case, it was done on review; so you would clearly think they would have looked at it. Maybe we could ask you to look at the specific evidence that we took in Canberra. This was overturned and, on review, a decision was made not to fund it. The local office was overruled.

Ms Gunn: Looking at it in detail would be of assistance. It may well have been the type, scale or nature of the prosthesis as well. **We are very happy to look at that.**

Answer:

When considering the funded supports to include in a participants plan, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) will be guided by the professional expertise of a medial or allied-health practitioner contained within medical reports. Recommendations contained within such reports will need to meet the reasonable and necessary criteria as set out on the *National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Act (2013)* and the *NDIS (Supports for participants) Rules 2013* to allow a delegate to make a reasonable and necessary decision regarding whether the requested item should be funded.

A prosthetics provider is required to provide recommendations in a standardised report or using the NDIS Assistive Technology assessment form. A requested item must meet all reasonable and necessary criteria, and all genuine alternatives should have been considered to show whether the recommended item is effective, beneficial, and the best value for money alternative to provide the functional outcome the participant is seeking.

It is expected that practitioners would provide evidence that the requested item has been recommended only after being evaluated against whether other supports would achieve the same outcome at a substantially lower cost. In the area of prosthetics, the NDIA is leading workshops with providers, including members of the Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association (AOPA) about the need to consider lower-cost devices before considering higher cost items such as computerised 'microprocessors' or 'myoelectric' devices. The cost difference between recommended items and alternatives has been up to \$100,000 for each item in some cases.

The NDIS will always fund devices to enhance functionality at a rate that ensures value for money, as is required by section 34 of the *NDIS Act (2013)*. Where a participant selects a device that is above the rate assessed as value for money to meet their functional outcomes, they have the option of covering the difference.

A scheduled plan review is an opportunity to identify what is working, what is not working, and what requires adjustments within a participant's plan, with a view towards them achieving outcomes during the plan review process. Supports may be requested, or evidence supplied, where the delegate is unable to make a reasonable and necessary decision without additional technical advice. In these circumstances, delegates have access to technical advisors within a national team located across every NDIA region who have specialist knowledge that is shared to ensure delegates are able to make a considered decision.

These advisors can be called on for advice by a delegate conducting a plan review. This way, each region has access to a national network of small and medium-sized enterprises rather than being limited to the expertise available in their local office.