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Committee Chair  
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Siewert

**Re Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs - National Disability Strategy 2010-2020**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the outcomes under the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020.

By way of background, for over 70 years Baptcare has been committed to meeting community needs, caring for the elderly, families, youth, people with disabilities, financially disadvantaged people, people from culturally diverse communities and asylum seekers. Baptcare provides support and services to those who are in direct receipt of a service such as home help, residential care, day support, kinship and foster care and independent living.

Baptcare works closely with people with disability, their family members and carers in Victoria and Tasmania. In particular, Baptcare provides case management and case coordination services to enable people with disability to access specific support services and community and mainstream services. This work involves assessment, personalised case planning, coordination, brokerage and information, linkages and referrals to other services (mainstream or funded). Whilst we focus on the support needed for the individual, we also support the carer or family member to navigate complex service systems. Baptcare works with people with disability, their families and carers to build their capacity to enable and empower them to live a 'good and satisfying life', one that is integrated into the communities within which they live. This submission is made in the context of our experience in working in collaboration with people with disability, their families and carers.

Our services and the way that we provide them reflect Baptcare's commitment to the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and the core philosophies of personalisation, citizenship and child safety standards.

Baptcare recognises that the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 represented a commitment by all levels of government, industry and the community to take a national approach to creating inclusive and accessible communities for people with disability.

The priority actions areas identified, which are articulated below, represented an opportunity to make real change within the Australian community.

1. Inclusive and accessible communities—the physical environment including public transport; parks, buildings and housing; digital information and communications technologies; civic life including social, sporting, recreational and cultural life.
2. Rights protection, justice and legislation—statutory protections such as anti-discrimination measures, complaints mechanisms, advocacy, the electoral and justice systems.
3. Economic security—jobs, business opportunities, financial independence, adequate income support for those not able to work, and housing.
4. Personal and community support—inclusion and participation in the community, person-centred care and support provided by specialist disability services and mainstream services; informal care and support.
5. Learning and skills—early childhood education and care, schools, further education, vocational education; transitions from education to employment; life-long learning.
6. Health and wellbeing—health services, health promotion and the interaction between health and disability systems; wellbeing and enjoyment of life.

Whilst much has been achieved since 2010, largely due to improved individual supports and community awareness of disability as a result of the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), there remains a need for improvement across all priority areas highlighted above.

Our experiences with our clients mean that we understand at a very personal level the barriers presented to people with a disability. In particular, our clients still experience difficulties due to:

- Equal and respectful access to everyday services, including those provided by government, such as education and health services. These services are fundamental to all, and are more important to people with disabilities who often have higher health needs and require extra supports in education.
- Lack of suitable employment - Australia's international ranking of 21<sup>st</sup> out of 29 OECD countries for employment of people with a disability is disappointing. As a nation we still have more to learn to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Barriers often present due to lack of understanding, fear of unfounded risks and lack of funds to make the reasonable adjustments necessary in the workplace.
- Practical and cultural barriers such as accessibility to venues, access to suitable transport, lack of access to communication mechanisms and social attitude towards people with disabilities.
- A general lack of awareness, education and training on the needs of people with a disability in governments, mainstream services, employers and community or social clubs.
- Continued view of disability as a problem to be fixed rather than understanding the need for society to see the individual first and the disability second, and focusing on the strengths of individuals and changing societal responses.
- Funding often becomes a barrier for improved social inclusion of people with disabilities - for example the funding needed to adapt buildings for accessibility or funding needed to support different forms of communication.

Despite these challenges this is a unique time in Australia's history with the implementation of the NDIS. The NDIS presents an opportunity for Australia as a nation to demonstrate its ability to implement social reform and create real social change for people with disabilities. Baptcare is proud and passionate about our opportunity to be directly part of this reform in Tasmania through the work of Local Area Coordination.

Baptcare wishes to highlight the benefits of the work occurring through the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the context of Information, Linkages and Capacity (ILC) building. In particular, the outcomes of the ILC which are:

1. People with disability are connected and have the information they need to make decisions and choices.
2. People with disability have the skills and confidence to participate and contribute to the community and protect their rights.
3. People with disability use and benefit from the same mainstream services as everyone else.
4. People with disability participate in and benefit from the same community activities as everyone else.
5. People with disability actively contribute to leading, shaping and influencing their community.

To achieve the above outcomes and the Disability Strategy priorities, and create an inclusive society, there is a need for 'joined up' and collaborative thinking and action from all key stakeholders. This includes collaboration with people with disabilities, families, carers, Governments (Commonwealth, State and Territory and Local Government), mainstream services, employers, Not for Profits, communities, disability service providers and the NDIS to work together. It is only through collaboration, passion, commitment and social change that this vision will be achieved and that barriers in social, economic and civic life will be removed. It is then that people with disabilities will be fully enabled to reach their full potential.

This change needs to be driven through a combined approach of strategic direction and action from the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and Local Governments who can work with and influence mainstream providers (such as Health, Education, Employers, Housing and the criminal justice system). This also needs to be combined with grassroots community based activities that seek to educate, and create inclusion and connections within local communities through ILC activities.

Social change on this scale cannot be achieved without the full involvement of people with disability, their families and carers and their involvement in the co-production of public policy. People with disabilities, their carers and families should be supported to participate in community and civic life, as this contributes to a person's sense of belonging and raises awareness with people who do not have a disability.



Baptcare would like to see that the next Disability Strategy is closely aligned with the work of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, with clear and transparent action plans and regular reporting that shows how these two major policy agendas work together across all levels of Government (Commonwealth, State and Territory and Local Government). Inclusion is not just about creating accessibility, it is about a changed approach to the way people think and view disability. People with disability should be afforded the same human rights as all other citizens.

In conclusion, Baptcare once again thanks the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs for the opportunity to respond to the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020. Baptcare supports a vision of society that values and respects people with disabilities as equal members of society and a society that is inclusive to all.

Baptcare welcome any contact by the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs should you wish to clarify any points or pursue further discussion on any topics raised.

Yours sincerely

Graham Dangerfield  
*Chief Executive*