



# “ NDIS....a wonderful new era?”

Or will ideological obsession stifle new service development models, flexibility and choice?

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Those reading the Productivity Commission report will be massively encouraged by the strong recommendations confirmed within e.g. page 3 (Overview and Recommendations) “ people will have much more choice..... people could cash out their funding allocation and direct the funding to areas of need” and page 25 “The commission has raised the possibility of an entirely new model of housing for people... people can then decide where they might live and what type of dwelling they might like”

Such a visionary approach should not only be applauded but delivered as quickly as possible. NDIS cannot come soon enough.

However giving genuine consumer driven choice is causing concern amongst some academics and advocacy groups. Could NDIS be about to take their power away?

For decades disability services have sadly been delivered in a divisive manner. This approach has caused massive division across the disability sector as consumers have felt their expectations cast aside often on the basis of academic theory and debateable research. Many experts have made a very good living peddling their ideas onto others. Some who think they know best seem to define their self worth by unflinchingly forcing their views. Consumers who disagree are quickly labelled as uneducated or ignorant. The big question remains “If the experts are correct why are their recommendations often so unpopular with so many rank and file consumers”?

While research will always remain important it’s importance must always be diluted against the individual wishes of each and every disability consumer. In the disability sector the right to widespread options and complete choice must be legislated. No option can be off the table. Using euphemisms like “evidence based services as a basis for service standards” denigrates the personal needs, wishes and wants of too many consumers. Evidence has been impossible to correlate on new service

models, the implementation of which has been previously stifled by lack of flexibility and choice. No one should be forced to bury their dream.

The release of the UN Convention on Disability has complicated the debate. While the UN convention enshrines the right to choose some have made choice the most abused word in the disability sector. While adopting slogans and logos aligned with choice the underlying message remains contradictory, people can choose providing they choose the traditional models experts and academics have championed for decades.

Some major advocacy groups are serial offenders. They have mostly been around for years, have the ear of government, often with the same leaders and policy makers and often lacking the genuine breadth of sector representation that will give comfort to those who the organizations purport to represent. Such advocates care little for the wishes, hopes and dreams of disability consumers and while disrespecting those with lived experience, propagate programs that treat people with a disability as if they are pumpkins.

The current "Shut In" campaign ([www.shutin.org.au](http://www.shutin.org.au)) is an example. Based on old fashioned and broad ranging assumptions (one size fits all) under the guise of attacking bogeyman institutions (Those horrible places that we all think should be shut) the reality is this program potentially attacks choice and worse still may stop the entrepreneurial design of future service models that will significantly increase flexibility, generate improved social interaction and enhance consumer and family management or lifestyle. As an example any one reading the bizarre SACID productivity commission submission [http://uat.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/99279/sub0046.pdf](http://uat.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0009/99279/sub0046.pdf) would be confused by rhetoric that champions SMF but only if spent in certain ways. Such contradiction defies logic and borders on nonsense and cannot go unchallenged.

The release of the NDIS Productivity Commission report has created an explosion of posturing and self justification as some embark on a concerted campaign to make sure their perspective of how disability services should be delivered are enshrined in any future NDIS legislation. The federal government must ignore this last gasp stand. Consumers have spoken strongly via the commission inquiry.

For the last decade governments both state and federal have been besieged by consumers and their families angry with being told how to live and who they will receive services from. The government must ensure that choice is not hijacked by the vocal but is enshrined for all in future legislation as a fundamental right. In 2006 when the SA Government ignored the experts and as part of a pre election deal with D4D the SA political party ran a series of public meetings specifically on housing they were overwhelmed by alternative responses and subsequently rewrote to the chagrin of traditionalists the SA strategic Plan. If one consumer disagrees with many they are still entitled to their choice.

In time current service recommendations will be surpassed by a wave of consumer driven models, many yet to be dreamed up or implemented. Over time when these new models are academically evaluated the success will be visible to all but the hardened sceptics and yesterdays best practise will be tomorrows fish and chip wrapper. If you want to see something sensational give tens of thousands of people with a disability the financial support and the opportunity to create something

special for themselves, get out of the way and watch in awe. Only then will you really see what the disability sector is really capable of.

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