



'Self Managed Funding'

Who will benefit?

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The announcement by SA Disability Minister the Hon Ian Hunter (ALP) last week that the phase one of the self managed funding pilot program was to be extended was a good one. For a new Minister Mr Hunter has already achieved a very good grasp of the complexities of his portfolio. Given the Social Inclusion Board " Strong Voices" report was hot of the press and waiting in his office a plan for the way forward did not need great research but rather the development of an implementation plan. This was no doubt of assistance to Mr Hunter.

Mr Hunter's announcement in December that 17 of the 34 key Strong Voices recommendations would be given priority was timely, but the lack of any additional funding was deeply concerning and remains the biggest issue in SA. Successive governments have worked hard on adopting disability policies that do not cost money while major issues requiring additional funding remain unaddressed. Last week's unmet need data was appalling as we reported.

Disability Speaks remains strongly supportive of SMF being an option of service for those who desire it. Disability Speaks has a number of members on various SA Government committees and boards associated with developing SMF, including board members who are already operating SMF packages. Such insight has been most helpful.

Mr Hunter's announcement on Friday that the 62 clients who have adopted self managed funding since the opening of the SA pilot program nearly two years ago may be joined by further applicants is a relatively small but important one. The SA government is aware that despite a highly vocal campaign by some sectors of the disability advocacy movement the pilot scheme has not been overwhelmed with applications and in fact has struggled to fill the targeted SMF quotas. In writing to 2200 Disability SA clients and inviting them to consider this SMF option Disability SA is aware that only 5-10% of clients are expected to take up self management while the vast majority of clients are going to continue to expect the government to do what governments are elected to do..... e.g. provide high level disability services to clients on a timely basis as needed.

People with a disability in SA should take Mr Hunter's announcement positively in context

- It is a very good announcement for a small number of potential clients
- No additional funding has been committed yet for any additional disability services (the SA Budget is in May)
- No potential clients on the unmet needs waiting list will benefit by this announcement, so over 3000 clients will continue to wait for basic services
- Many clients (some 90%) will be delighted they are not going to be forced into a self managed funding management situation
- There will remain a very high demand for the government to develop modern and innovative disability service models
- The SMF model needs to be further developed to create flexibility and cost benefits, work which is currently underway
- That individualised funding and SMF are not the same thing

Disability Speaks met with Mr Hunter on Friday and discussed SMF amongst a range of issues. We are confident his balance and approach is very positive and at the same time he is driving the department to develop more separation of individualised funding packages to further create flexibility with services going forward.

One issue that still remains is that many in the sector confuse self managed funding and individualised funding. Kelly Vincent MLC (D4d) is correct in her press release (copy attached) that the move to individualised funding will create enormous change for disability service providers.

We look forward to further operational efficiency announcements but more importantly serious action to address the chronic underfunding in disability services in SA.

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