

07 August 2018



Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health and Community Services
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000
via PortfolioCommittee2@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Committee Members

Submission to Inquiry into Implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the provision of disability services in New South Wales

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to this important inquiry.

We write to emphasise the critical importance of specialist, independent disability advocacy organisations and the vital role that they play in achieving better outcomes for people with disability across the state.

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) is an independent, non-profit legal centre based in Sydney. Established in 1982, PIAC tackles barriers to justice and fairness experienced by people who are vulnerable or facing disadvantage. We ensure basic rights are enjoyed across the community through legal assistance and strategic litigation, public policy development, communication and training.

Our work addresses a wide range of issues, including access for people with disability to basic services like public transport, financial services, media and digital technologies. Recent projects in this area include engaging in strategic litigation to help achieve 'next stop' announcements on trains for blind and vision-impaired travellers, and to seek reforms to the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) to require broadcasters to screen a minimum of 14 hours per week of audio-described content.

In these and other campaigns, we have worked closely together with organisations representing people with disability in NSW. As a result, we understand their importance as a source of expertise and a voice for people with disability.

Unfortunately, long-term funding for these organisations remains uncertain.

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Committee Members will be aware that the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) does not fund disability advocacy, information or representation. This means that responsibility to provide ongoing funding for disability advocacy remains with the NSW Government – but it has allocated the relevant funding (\$13 million per year) to the NDIS.

The announcement by Premier Berejiklian in April 2018 that the NSW Government will continue to provide funding for another two years (approximately \$26 million) to disability advocacy organisations was obviously very welcome. However, this funding is due to expire in June 2020, placing the long-term future of these organisations in jeopardy.

PIAC supports calls for long-term funding to be maintained for disability advocacy, representation and information services beyond 2020, to ensure that people with disability continue to have a voice in the decisions that affect them.

It is important to recognise the benefit to government of having properly-funded disability advocacy organisations, as a source of expert independent advice and as peak bodies with whom it can consult in an effective and timely manner about policy and laws which affect the many people living with disability across the state.

PIAC urges this Committee to recommend that the NSW Government provide long-term, ongoing funding for disability advocacy, information and representation organisations in NSW as part of the continued implementation of the NDIS.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should the Committee require further information

Yours faithfully

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