

## UNMET NEEDS

### Accommodation

Non-Government providers of supported accommodation for people with disabilities are falling behind Government services in the funding they receive, according to the Productivity Commissions 'Report on Government Services 2001'.

This funding 'gap' has grown from \$30,690 per place in 1998/99 to \$35,088 in 1999/2000.

Non-Government Organisations take pride in their ability to run cost-effective services, however this should not be used as a basis for reducing funds from the savings made from the devolution of State Government services.

- There is significant unmet need for supported accommodation services in all States.
- The ACPA strongly supports the process of deinstitutionalisation, however this should not result in older carers in the community having to wait longer for a placement for their son or daughter.
- Cuts in funding under the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement have resulted in a very limited supply of suitably accessible houses. As such, even when recurrent funds are available, to establish a group home for example, long delays can be expected in housing 're-builds' or new constructions. In addition, Disability Services Providers are now required to commit 'disability' funds as a form of equity in order to obtain suitable housing (up to 20% of the total costs). This can be prohibitive for smaller agencies in particular, let alone the cost shifting from housing to disability.

How can the Disability Sector participate in the establishment of future Commonwealth/State Housing Agreements to ensure a fairer, better planned and coordinated approach to the future accommodation needs of people with disabilities?

### Day Services/Employment

The impact of the ageing process for people with disabilities will provide challenges across the sector viz:

- Many people with disabilities in day services may not wish or be able to continue attending activities on a regular basis.
- Many people with disabilities in supported employment services may opt to partake in day activities which are less rigorous than day-to-day work.

In the first example, this will mean that people with disabilities will be spending more time in accommodation services and in the family home.

In the second, there will be a cost impact on State funded day activities as people leave Commonwealth funded supported employment programmes. There is currently little focus on transition programmes from work to retirement (which will occur at a much younger age for people with severe disabilities).

Commonwealth Aged Care Employment Programmes need to be coordinated with State funded day activity programmes to ensure a more certain future for people with disabilities and their carers. Disability funding support more often continues well into the time when Commonwealth Aged Care packages need to be activated.

<sup>1</sup> Box, Greg and Knowles, John, (2001), "Putting the issues forward", *ACtion Packed*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 6-7

Employment services are suffering under the impost of the continued 1% efficiency dividend (now at a cumulative total of 7%) and the impact of case based funding which is forcing many people with high support needs out of potential employment places.

How can the Commonwealth, States and Territory Governments work together with the Non-Government sector in developing improved services that reflect the ageing process and the need for transition for people with disabilities?

## Therapy and Equipment

Therapy for children with disabilities is in significant demand. Adults with disabilities have very little access to publicly funded therapy and yet it is so important for their ongoing quality of life.

For example, there is significant under funding for Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology and Social Work. Therapy seems to have been caught up in the Health/Disability argument and this political 'see-saw' ultimately compromises the rights of people with disabilities to a better standard of living.

The Disability focus that is aimed at identifying the specific needs of people with disabilities often provides a convenient 'tag' to absolve the health sector from their responsibilities.

Disability resources therefore end up being further stretched to make up for the lack of service provision in health.

ACPA estimates that less than \$300 per annum per person is expended on therapy needs of adults with physical disabilities who have high support needs – even less for people with severe and multiple disabilities.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Box, Greg and Knowles, John, (2001), "Putting the issues forward", *ACtion Packed*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 6-7