



CEREBRAL PALSY AUSTRALIA

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Funding and Operation of the Commonwealth State and Territory Disability Agreement

Cerebral Palsy Australia (CP Australia) as a member of ACROD fully supports that organisation's submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Funding and Operation of the Commonwealth State and Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA)

However, CP Australia believes there are three critical areas of interest to our membership that require further emphasis because these issues have the greatest potential to ensure greater participation of people with disabilities in community life:

- Provision of therapy and professional services, including early intervention;
- Provision of equipment and technology to maintain and maximise individual independence; and
- Research at all levels and in particular research into the causal pathways of disability.

CP Australia has engaged the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to conduct a project "*Therapy and Equipment in Australia: The needs of people with cerebral palsy and like disabilities*". The project is funded by CP Australia member organisations and with the support of the Telstra Foundation. The objectives of the project are to:

- Review and summarise the key findings of national and international literature about the definitions, costs and benefits of therapy, and whether therapy 'makes a difference' for people with disabilities related to, or similar to those related to, cerebral palsy—that is, its relationship to improvements in and maintenance of levels of functioning.
- Identify the nature and quantify the extent of met, partially met and unmet need for therapies and equipment among people, of different ages, with cerebral palsy and similar disabilities.
- Estimate the effects of the provision of therapy and equipment in terms of improved or maintained individual functioning and participation, at different ages, and in terms of reduced social costs of disability.

The report will be available later in the year and it is strongly recommended that the Senate Inquiry avail itself of this project's findings to guide the operations of a future CSTDA.

The project will provide important information consistent with the Council of Australian Governments direction to increase investment in early childhood development, importantly, it is likely to identify therapy as a major strategy for improving social participation for people with cerebral palsy and similar disabilities. If this is the case, similar needs are very likely to exist for other disability groups.

CP Australia's initiative to engage AIHW is evidence of the paucity of research being funded through the CSTDA. Whilst the CSTDA Research and Development Program exists to investigate the need for the development of services, innovations in planning and service delivery; and the measurement of outcomes for people with disability using services, the program has not engaged sufficiently with non-government organizations to carry out its research program.

In future, there needs to be wider consultation with the non-government organizations to develop and carry out its research program.

For example, CP Australia, through its member organizations, State Government support and private sponsorship, has brought considerable resources to bear to ensure that each State in Australia is covered by a Cerebral Palsy Register. There is now a need for this data to be housed and analyzed nationally to advance Australia's knowledge on the causal pathways to cerebral palsy.

This 'National Cerebral Palsy Register' has potential to deliver long-term gains in the understanding of what causes cerebral palsy but also as a national aid to the planning and delivery of services for relatively little outlay (\$0.2m).

A future CSTDA needs to invest in this and similar research programs to advance the understanding of and planning for disability services.

CP Australia is available to discuss these and other issues in further detail.

JOHN KNOWLES
PRESIDENT
CEREBRAL PALSY AUSTRALIA
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CONTACT
john.knowles@cpawa.com.au
(08) 94430212 or 0428956617

PO Box 61
Mount Lawley WA 6929

www.cpaustralia.com.au

About CP Australia

Cerebral Palsy Australia (CP Australia) represents individuals and organisations providing services to people with cerebral palsy and other similar disabilities and their families across Australia.

CP Australia is supported through its membership. Incorporated in 1953 as the Australian Cerebral Palsy Association, we have sought to provide a national focus for disability awareness, service development for children and adults with cerebral palsy and other disabilities and those issues reflecting community values such as integration, acceptance and valuing of people with disabilities.

In Australia, the disability sector has a history that has been heavily influenced by institutionalisation and subsequent de-institutionalisation processes. People with disabilities have been one of the most marginalised, and at risk groups in our community. CP Australia was established to ensure these issues achieved national prominence and that the risks to people, particularly at times of significant changes to public policy, reflected community values and interest.

The combined services of member organisations exceed \$200 million for over 25,000 people.

Member organisations include the Spastic Centre of NSW, Novita Inc, Cerebral Palsy Association of WA Inc, Community Accommodation & Respite Agency Inc, Scope (Vic) Inc, Yooralla Society of Victoria, Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland, Cootharinga Society of Northern Queensland, Leveda Inc, Community Connections Australia, Community Access Service Inc, Cerebral Palsy Tasmania, Therapy Focus Inc and the Centre for Developmental Disability Studies