



Embargoed: 10.30am, Wednesday 6 August 2008

Media Release

33,797 Australians with Cerebral Palsy have a balance owing

The Economic Impact of Cerebral Palsy in Australia in 2007, an Access Economics report commissioned by Cerebral Palsy Australia, was launched in Melbourne today by the Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, The Hon Bill Shorten MP.

The report found that, in 2007, the financial cost of Cerebral Palsy (CP) in Australia was \$1.47 billion or 0.14% of GDP. When the value of lost wellbeing (disability and premature death) was added, the cost rose a further \$2.4 billion.

Access Economics estimates that 33,797 Australians had CP in 2007. At an annual financial cost of \$43,431 per person, the cost to the individual is estimated at 36.7% of the total – or \$306 per week.

Mr Shorten applauded CP Australia for commissioning the research, saying it would be a very powerful tool for anyone involved in the sector.

"Bringing together this data allows everyone involved in the sector to see where real inroads can be made.

"This Government is very much committed to looking for ways to ease the burden and improve the quality of life of our most marginalised members of society."

The financial cost of Cerebral Palsy in 2007 was recorded against areas such as productivity lost, welfare payments, taxation forgone, direct program services, aids and home modifications and informal care.

The Federal Government shares the bulk of the financial burden, bearing approximately 32.8% of the financial cost of the condition.

Lynne Pezzullo, Director, Access Economics said 'The analysis underscores the need for strategies in Australia to address CP and its impacts, including research, better diagnosis and early intervention, addressing health service

delivery issues, employment initiatives, policies to assist carers, appropriate accommodation options, and financing reforms.'

Speaking on behalf of CP Australia, Diana Heggie, Chief Executive Officer of SCOPE Victoria commended the Government and Mr Shorten on their commitment to the sector and the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in particular.

Ms Heggie welcomed the research as it crystallised a number of key challenges the sector is facing.

"From day to day, employment is our number one challenge.

"Appropriate employment opportunities that provide the flexibility our clients need are critical to the independence of our clients, which improves quality of life," she said.

Ms Heggie said the industry is also challenged by the task of attracting and retaining staff in carer roles. Roles in the disability sector have traditionally been uncompetitive in terms of recognition and remuneration.

The sector also faces accommodation challenges for people with disabilities. As the population continues to age, adults with disabilities who have been cared for their entire lives by their parents will need alternative accommodation as their parents leave the family home requiring care for themselves.

Media contact:

Sarah Nash, Socom on 0425 262 314