

Standing Committee on Social Issues

**Services provided or funded
by the Department of
Ageing, Disability and Home
Care**

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Executive summary

This Inquiry was referred to the Committee on 24 June 2010, to examine the quality, effectiveness and delivery of services provided or funded by Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC). The extent of unmet need for disability services was required to be examined, including whether there were regional or other variations in the capacity and quality of disability services. We received 112 submissions and 8 supplementary submissions, which reflected a range of experiences, views and recommendations to improve the current disability service system.

The important role that ADHC plays in the provision of essential services to the lives of many people was highlighted through the Inquiry. This includes both service users who directly access services and their carers and families who depend on supports such as advocacy and respite. Recent improvements in the disability service system were acknowledged by some participants, however, a significant amount of evidence also identified the desperate need for further improvement in some key areas.

Many service users and carers made an important contribution to this Inquiry. The Committee's deliberations are indebted to their courage in coming forward and sharing often difficult experiences. Through sharing these experiences we were able to learn more about the disability service system and ensure that the recommendations made would assist the system to develop in a way that best serves the needs of the very people who depend upon it.

Funding

In order to effectively examine issues regarding services provided and funded by ADHC, the Committee considered the current funding of disability services. We consider that funding provided through Stronger Together has noticeably improved the provision of disability services in NSW, however, it is clear that funding does not meet the current demand for many services and as such there is a significant amount of unmet need. The demand for disability and ageing services is not likely to decrease in future, in fact the Committee heard evidence of a growing and ageing population. This means that pressure on the service system is likely to grow, which increases the urgency for the development of a well-planned and responsive, rather than reactive, service system.

We agree with ADHC and the many participants who identified that measurement of unmet need is a serious issue and should be addressed as a priority. However, for areas of service provision that clearly demonstrate a significant level of unmet need, data should not be used as an excuse for inaction. Stronger Together II provides an opportunity to increase the funding to disability services, plan a responsive service system and address the issues identified through this Inquiry. The Committee has recommended that at least \$2.5 billion is provided for Stronger Together II to meet these goals (Recommendation 3).

Individualised funding options have the potential to provide improved choice, flexibility and control for service users. While we acknowledge that individualised funding may not be suitable for all service users, for many people this person-centred funding approach will improve their quality of life through providing improved autonomy, flexibility and choice. The Committee commends the Government for providing individualised funding options through phase one of Stronger Together, and also through committing to delivering personalised funding arrangements during phase two. We support this approach and have recommended that Stronger Together II includes the development of a

comprehensive strategy to make individualised funding models available for all people who receive services from ADHC, who wish to utilise them (Recommendation 6).

Person-centred planning and supported accommodation

The move towards a person-centred service system will significantly improve the quality of services available. ADHC is moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach towards person-centred service planning and delivery, which is supported by the Committee. ADHC has already made some progress, however, there is still a long way to go before all service planning, delivery and funding is provided with the service user at the centre of decisions.

Some aspects of services provided and funded by ADHC are inflexible and cause unnecessary stress for service users. The inflexibility of the system that is encountered by many people makes planning for their future services very difficult and causes additional anguish, fear and frustration for service users and their families. While this issue was experienced in many service types, we heard this issue most profoundly in peoples' experience of supported accommodation. We are greatly concerned for the service users and families who are currently required to reach a point of crisis before supported accommodation is available to them. We are disappointed that the service system has let these people down.

Given the shortage of supported accommodation placements available, we have recommended that improved support is provided to all service users and their families who register on ADHC's *Register of Request for Supported Accommodation* (Recommendation 36). We have also recommended that additional supported accommodation placements are made available through Stronger Together II and that a comprehensive service planning framework is developed to forward plan service delivery, rather than continuing to provide services such as these on a crisis basis (Recommendation 9).

Individualised planning is not currently required to take place for people who reside in long-term respite placements. This is of great concern to the Committee. It is an example of a significant gap and unmet need in person-centred planning and service delivery. We recommend that *all* service users who are in, or are likely to remain in, long-term placements have access to individualised planning, in-line with the Government's commitment to a person-centred approach (Recommendation 7). We have also recommended that a person-centred approach is developed and implemented for all funding programs and service types during Stronger Together II (Recommendation 10).

Eligibility, intake and assessment

Significant challenges are created for people who attempt to navigate the disability service system through unclear and poorly communicated eligibility criteria and intake and assessment rules. There is a lack of consistency across and within ADHC regions, no tracking system for referrals for many service types, poor communication with service users and an unnecessary duplication of needs assessments being completed by ADHC. People with disability can face many challenges and well functioning intake and assessment process is required to adequately support, rather than provide challenge, to the lives of these people.

We heard evidence that ADHC complete a needs assessment, even when the agency has a comprehensive one that has been completed by a professional. The lengthy delay that this can cause with regard to accessing services is unnecessary and a waste of scarce resources. We have recommended that a review of ADHC's intake and assessment process is undertaken, which reduces

duplicate needs assessments being completed, through not requiring ADHC to complete an assessment when one has been completed by the referring professional (Recommendation 21).

An issue regarding financial eligibility relates to the lack of assessment of expenses incurred by people with disability who access multiple services, as part of means testing requirements. We believe that the inclusion of assessment of expenses in means tests would provide a more comprehensive picture of people with disability's financial position and ensure that these people are not further disadvantaged by this process. We have recommended that ADHC's means testing policy is reviewed with view to including assessment of expenses (Recommendation 19).

ADHC has committed to creating a consistent and streamlined intake and assessment process for accessing specialist disability services, specifically committing to reviewing different intake models, the number of entry points and developing a single set of priority of access criteria. We believe that this review could significantly improve the intake and assessment process and that it should be expedited. We have recommended that the review of the intake and assessment process for disability services is expedited to address entry to the system, prevent duplicate needs assessments being completed where possible, improve notification of eligibility and entitlements to services, improve consistency in intake and assessment processes and improve navigation of the system (Recommendation 21).

Transition planning

We received a great deal of evidence regarding a lack of planning that takes place during times of predictable transition in the lives of service users'. The Committee has recommended that ADHC's transition policy is reviewed and amended to improve the support available to people who transition, the timing of support provided, service user awareness of transition programs and intake rules and to reduce delays and absence of planning (Recommendation 11). We have also recommended that improved co-ordination be implemented across Government agencies, such as ADHC and NSW Health, to assist people who transition from hospital to home (Recommendation 12). Improvement is also required in the transition of service users into group homes. It is vital that ADHC funded and provided service staff understand and implement transition policy to ensure that a person-centred approach is implemented, for both the person who is transitioning into accommodation options and existing residents.

Large residential centres

Although Large Residential Centres (LRCs) have been redeveloped by the Government, too many people continue to live in these centres. LRCs do not comply with the NSW Disability Service Standards, the *Disability Services Act 1993* or the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. While the Committee agrees that an appropriate 'mix' of accommodation options is required in order to best meet the diverse needs of service users, we also believe that all options made available to service users must comply with the relevant disability service policies and legislation. For the vast majority of service users, congregate care settings will not be the most appropriate, person-centred option suitable for their needs.

We have recommended that the devolution of LRCs is maximised through providing person-centred planning and support for *every* service user who is currently housed in these centres (Recommendation 42). The Committee believes that if every service user received person-centred planning, a very small number who had extremely high support needs may remain in congregate settings.

Home modification and maintenance

Home modification and maintenance services are essential in enabling service users to live in their own home in the community. There are delays in accessing these services due to a lack of Occupational Therapists and long waiting periods to access NSW Health Occupational Therapy assessments. Issues regarding a lack of funding and poor quality of service provision are also significant for this program. The possibility that unlicensed builders may be used to modify service users' homes is of great concern to the Committee. Although we have not received sufficient evidence to be able to determine whether all service providers are either licensed or use licensed builders, the lack of certainty is a significant concern. The requirement for service providers to indicate that they comply with legislation through the Annual Compliance Return has not provided the Committee with the required level of assurance that home modification and maintenance services comply with relevant legislation. ADHC should be able to report *with certainty* that their services comply with the *Home Building Act 1989*.

We have recommended that the current home modification and maintenance service review includes consultation with stakeholders to address potential non-compliance with the *Home Building Act 1989*, including the use of unlicensed builders, funding levels and shortages, waiting lists and options to streamline the application process (Recommendation 44).

Culturally appropriate service provision

There are many additional challenges faced by people with disability from non-English speaking backgrounds when attempting to access disability services and support. The provision of culturally appropriate services is an area of disability service provision that has improved; however, it has a long way to go before it adequately meets the needs of these people. There is a significant under-representation of people with disability from non-English speaking backgrounds accessing ADHC services, with approximately 36 per cent of people from non-English speaking backgrounds having disability, but only around 5 per cent of these people accessing ADHC services. The barriers these people face include a lack of culturally appropriate information and services, cultural differences towards 'disability', lack of appropriately trained staff and a focus on managing disability rather than supporting people who happen to have disability.

We also sadly heard that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability are some of the most disadvantaged people in Australia. Again, there have been improvements in this area, for example through changes to the Aboriginal Home Care Service resulting in the provision of more culturally appropriate services. However, until there is a significant shift in the way that services are able to be accessed by Aboriginal people, towards a more flexible, person-centred and culturally appropriate model, we feel that there will be little improvement. This includes developing a service system that allows Aboriginal workers to work in a culturally competent way rather than imposing a system on them that may work for other groups, but is inappropriate for them.

The commitment by ADHC to increase the number of Aboriginal staff may assist the agency to provide more culturally appropriate services. We have recommended that this is completed in conjunction with cultural competence training for *all* employees (Recommendation 33). This training would result in more staff being able to provide appropriate services and it would improve the choice that Aboriginal people have regarding who they receive services from.

We have questioned whether there are adequate advocacy organisations and services available to represent the needs of people with disability from Aboriginal communities and from non-English speaking backgrounds. There is currently only one advocacy organisation funded by ADHC that

provides services for people with disability from non-English speaking backgrounds. We have recommended that ADHC incorporate diversity measures and outcomes in all program guidelines, to convey the importance and requirement to provide culturally appropriate services (Recommendation 34). We also believe that the lack of free interpreter services to people with disability from a non-English speaking background is a barrier to them receiving services and recommended that this is made available (Recommendation 32).

Licensed boarding houses

Boarding houses are an accommodation option for both people with and without disability, and house approximately 800 residents in NSW. They are monitored by ADHC licensing officers and are visited by Official Community Visitors. We are concerned that unlicensed boarding houses have neither of these safeguards and that some may be operating illegally, reducing the quality of care that may be provided to some of the most vulnerable and marginalized people in society. The referral of people with disability to unlicensed boarding house accommodation in the absence of other accommodation options is particularly disturbing to the Committee.

We have recommended that people who reside in boarding houses receive person-centred planning and assurance that the services they receive comply with the NSW Disability Service Standards.

Equipment and aids

The importance of having appropriate aids and equipment for people with disability is acknowledged by the Committee. Access to equipment is critical in enabling people to undertake regular activities, such as moving around, personal care, attending school or generally accessing the community. Both ADHC and NSW Health play a role in relation to aids and equipment through case management, occupational therapy assessment and referral (ADHC), and for the administration of disability support programs such as Enable NSW (NSW Health).

We are very concerned at the reports of service users having to wait up to two years between assessment of their need for a piece of equipment and receiving it. This is unacceptable and is a huge area of unmet need. It is ADHC's responsibility to ensure that their service users receive essential equipment when they need it, and to remove any barriers to this access. Lengthy waiting periods for equipment can have a devastating impact on service users and carers. We sympathise with their frustration in observing the provision of equipment on a crisis basis. In most cases the provision of equipment is not managed in line with ADHC's person-centred approach to service planning and delivery, and requires significant improvement.

We have recommended that the implementation of a program of interest free loans for equipment and aids for ADHC service users and other people with disabilities is investigated (Recommendation 41). These loans would allow for greater flexibility and a more person-centred approach to service provision.

Standards of quality and complaint handling

The NSW Disability Service Standards (NSW DSS) and the *Disability Services Act 1993* (NSW) provide the foundation for the quality of services provided to people with disability in NSW. However, some services provided or funded by ADHC do not comply with this important policy and legislation. Services are also sometimes not provided in accordance with the United National Convention on the

Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The poor monitoring of service compliance with this policy and legislation is one of the most significant issues identified through the Inquiry. We are concerned that ADHC is not able to respond to breaches of the NSW DSS in a reasonable time frame or in a reasonable manner in some cases

Services such as LRCs, tools such as ADHC's vacancy management system and the behaviour of some staff are examples of non-compliance with NSW DSS. There is variation between ADHC central office and local implementation of NSW DSS policy and a lack of staff knowledge and training in the use and implementation of the NSW DSS. We have recommended that the NSW Government establish an independent agency to monitor the compliance of disability service provision with the NSW DSS, the Act and the UNCRPD (Recommendation 47). This agency would reduce the potential for conflict of interest to occur and also be responsible for handling complaints and managing third party accreditation of disability service providers.

On numerous occasions, service users and their families experienced poor complaint handling when attempting to provide feedback and resolve issues about services received by ADHC or funded organisations. Adequate policies and processes are required to effectively handle complaints and to ensure compliance with the NSW DSS. We have recommended that ADHC's complaint handling policy is reviewed to ensure that complaints are addressed in a timely manner, the policy is accessible to all service users, implements staff training and develops appropriate resources for funded organisations to improve understanding of complaint handling processes (Recommendation 46). As outlined, we have also recommended that an independent organisation is established to, amongst other responsibilities, handle complaints about disability service provision.

Conflict of interest

There is the potential for a conflict of interest to occur through ADHC's incompatible responsibilities of funder and regulator of disability services, while also being a major service provider. The NSW Law Reform Commission recommended many years ago that an *independent* organisation is required to accredit and monitor disability services. We support this recommendation and believe that it would reduce the potential for a conflict of interest to occur while improving the quality of disability services provided (Recommendation 47). Having an independent organisation whose sole responsibility is service provision quality, would address many of the issues identified through this Inquiry including complaint handling, quality monitoring, compliance with the NSW DSS, third party accreditation and conflict of interest.

Advocacy services are currently funded by ADHC which reduces the ability for independent advocacy services to be provided to service users. A conflict results from advocates being funded by the organisation they may inadvertently criticise through their role of supporting people with disability to access appropriate services. As ADHC also fund and provide services, ADHC funded advocacy services are not impartial or independent. This may impact upon the ability for advocates to provide the most appropriate advice to service users. We have recommended that the funding for advocacy services is moved to a Department that is independent of disability service provision (Recommendation 48). This would free advocates to provide the most appropriate services and support to individual service users' needs without fear of 'biting the hand that feeds them'.

Carers

The important social and financial contribution of the approximately 750,000 unpaid carers in the disability system in NSW cannot be underestimated. The system depends on these people who often provide care to their loved ones under very challenging circumstances. Many carers are not well supported and may even have their situation made worse by the current disability service system, through poor planning, a lack of support services and an inflexible service system. We acknowledge the steps the Government has taken to recognise and support the important role carers play in the community, although evidence received through this Inquiry suggested that there is still a long way to go.

We are deeply concerned by the stress and fear experienced by the many carers whose attempts to plan for the future of their children have not been well supported by ADHC. We are disappointed that access to supported accommodation is largely provided in response to crisis and emergency, rather than in a planned way. A system that requires its families to reach breaking point before providing adequate support and services is unacceptable. A summary of our recommendations to improve access, support and provision of supported accommodation are identified in 'person-centred planning and supported accommodation' on page xiv.

Staff

People with disability and their families place a high value on staff that are highly professional, experienced and caring. There are many thousands of hard working and caring employees who work in the ageing and disability support sector. The positive comments that persons with disability and their families expressed towards their carers were some of the few positive comments that we received during this Inquiry.

ADHC's Workforce Recruitment Strategy is supported by the Committee, in addition to the proactive recruitment work undertaken by ADHC and non-government service providers to assist in attracting people to the profession. As funding for this program is not allocated beyond 2012, we recommended that the strategy is reviewed with a view to extending it for a further two years, six months prior to the end of current funding (Recommendation 51). The high turnover of disability service staff is of concern to the Committee as it reduces the quality of care provided to service users and their families. We have recommended that ADHC convene a cross sector working party to develop a workforce retention strategy (Recommendation 52).

We strongly support the principle of equal pay for staff delivering the same service, no matter whether a carer is an employee of ADHC or a non-government provider. We acknowledge that the successful outcome of the pay equity case before Fair Work Australia will have funding implications, which will need to be addressed by the Government.

The level of training for Home Care workers is of concern to the Committee. Examples of clients being injured by poorly-trained, ill-equipped staff are unacceptable, so we recommended that the Home Care Service of NSW undertake an evaluation of training levels for all care workers (Recommendation 53). The majority of ADHC care workers provide outstanding work, which allows people with disability to participate more fully in community life and offers respite for carers. However, we received evidence of carer staff who are rude, abusive and sometimes neglect service users. We strongly believe that both ADHC and funded organisations need to strengthen reporting and accountability mechanisms, so that clients can report inappropriate staff behaviour and have confidence that their concerns will be dealt with promptly and appropriately.

The extra challenges that both service providers and service users face in rural and remote communities is acknowledged. The challenges relate to geographical distance, recruitment of suitably qualified people and the provision of training. The Committee received evidence that the provision of disability and ageing services is more expensive in rural and remote areas. We have recommended that ADHC investigate these concerns, with a view to increasing the funding for services in rural and regional areas if required (Recommendation 55).

Data and research

Infrequent Australian Bureau of Statistics data collection is a significant issue for disability service system planning in NSW. This makes it difficult for ADHC to best plan for the needs of people with disability and for phase two of Stronger Together. We acknowledge the work that ADHC is undertaking to make good use of other relevant statistical data collection. We have recommended that the existing data that is collected by both ADHC and through other means is audited so that data gaps can be identified regarding unmet need for disability and ageing services in NSW (Recommendation 1).

A survey of service users, carers and their families is recommended to be completed by ADHC every three years to improve ADHC's understanding of the population that is receiving a service, the level of unmet need and any other relevant issues that are not captured through other means (Recommendation 49).

Summary of recommendations

- Recommendation 1** **35**
That the Minister for Disability Services audit the existing data that is collected by ADHC and data that is available to ADHC, identify any additional data that is required to accurately assess unmet and under-met need for ageing and disability services in NSW.
- That the NSW Government amend the *Disability Services Act 1993* to require the Minister for Disability Services to table a biannual report into unmet and under-met need for ageing and disability services in NSW.
- Recommendation 2** **35**
That ADHC prioritise the attainment of its targets for supported accommodation places, as identified in the first phase of Stronger Together.
- Recommendation 3** **38**
That the NSW Government commit at least \$2.5 billion to deliver phase two of Stronger Together. That phase two funding is provided in addition to the \$1.3 billion in funding that was provided during phase one and is announced by the end of December 2010.
- Recommendation 4** **38**
That the Minister for Disability Services table an annual report to Parliament on the implementation of, and expenditure on, Stronger Together II.
- Recommendation 5** **41**
That the Minister for Disability Services report publicly on ADHC's implementation of the recommendations of the NGO Red Tape Reduction report by November 2011 including the level of third party outsourcing by ADHC NGO-contracted service providers.
- Recommendation 6** **46**
That the next phase of Stronger Together include development of a comprehensive strategy to make individualised funding models available for all people who receive services from ADHC, who wish to utilise them.
- Recommendation 7** **53**
That the Minister for Disability Services ensure that all service users who are in, or are likely to remain in, long-term placements have access to individualised planning.
- That this is achieved through:
- conducting a review of service users who have been in, or are likely to remain in, placements long-term and have not received individualised planning
 - completing individualised planning for these service users as a matter of priority
 - ensuring that individualised planning is provided for all accommodation placements that are, or are likely to be, long-term.
- Recommendation 8** **53**
That the Minister for Disability Services develop and implement an outreach approach for the planning of disability services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Recommendation 9**54**

That the Minister for Disability Services convene a Working Group made up of government Departments, NGO service providers, representatives of the Disability Council of NSW and other stakeholders, to develop and implement a comprehensive service planning framework, in consultation with disability service stakeholders, to identify how the disability service system will develop over the next five years.

That the framework:

- identifies how and when policy priorities, including person-centred planning, will be incorporated into service provision
- integrates planning at a state, regional, local and organisational level and provides tools to strengthen planning at an organisational level
- demonstrates how data and research will be used to inform development of the disability service system over time
- is published on ADHC's website.

Recommendation 10**54**

That the Minister for Disability Services work in collaboration with the non-government sector and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement a person-centred approach for *all* funding programs and service types during phase two of Stronger Together.

Recommendation 11**59**

That the Minister for Disability Services, in consultation with the Department of Education and Training, review and amend transition planning policies as part of phase two of Stronger Together.

That the review:

- is conducted in consultation with relevant stakeholders including services users, carers and their families
- increases awareness of the Transition to School program
- ensures that all people with disability leaving school are able to access transition planning as early as possible
- improves transition support and planning provided to people with disability from non-English speaking backgrounds who are leaving school
- provides clear resources for service users, carers and their families who are seeking information on how to access transition planning services
- ensures that people with disability receive appropriate support upon entering the education system and that access to education does not result in adverse consequences such as a reduction in necessary services or supports.

That the review and actions resulting from the review are published on ADHC's website.

Recommendation 12**64**

That the NSW Government review and amend transition policy and processes for people with disability who transition from hospital to home.

That the outcome of the review ensures that people have appropriate, accessible and well-coordinated support available prior to transitioning out of hospital and during the period of readjustment to their home. The review should consider existing successful programs and models, such as the South East Sydney Illawarra Area Health Service Agency for Clinical Innovation Transition Model.

Recommendation 13 **64**

That the NSW Government review and clarify current staff responsibilities in transition planning, including reviewing whether hospital social workers are the most appropriate role to conduct this planning and whether there is a greater coordinating role for ADHC caseworkers.

That the review identifies clear staff roles responsible for providing support to service users while they complete transition planning in hospital and as they re-settle in their home. That the outcomes of the review are communicated to all relevant staff.

That the review identifies safeguards to prevent people with disability from being discharged from hospital with inadequate support.

Recommendation 14 **64**

That the Minister for Disability Services provide ADHC case management to all ADHC service users who are being discharged from hospital.

Recommendation 15 **64**

That the NSW Government consider the Spinal Cord Injuries Response initiative for relevance to the NSW disability service sector.

Recommendation 16 **67**

That the Minister for Disability services ensure that current policy regarding transition planning in accommodation services is understood and implemented by all relevant staff, to ensure that a person-centred approach is implemented, for both the person who is transitioning into accommodation options and existing residents.

Recommendation 17 **72**

That the NSW Government review and amend the process by which ADHC and NSW Health share sensitive information about service users who access both agencies.

That the review:

- develops and applies a common understanding of the meaning of 'confidential information' in the context of health and disability service user information sharing
- identifies how confidential information can be shared between agencies to improve the quality of services provided, including considering issues of consent
- learns from the successful models of information sharing between ADHC and NSW Health that exist in some regions
- learns from the achievements of information sharing in Keep Them Safe and applies them as appropriate.

That the report resulting from the review and ADHC response to recommendations are published on the website.

Recommendation 18

72

That the NSW Government amend the requirement for people with disability to obtain multiple statements from General Practitioners to confirm their disability when accessing ADHC services, to allow the General Practitioners statement to be valid for varying periods of time that are relevant to the disability and needs of the individual.

Recommendation 19

75

That the NSW Government review and amend means testing policy for people with disability attempting to access services, to include assessment of expenses, so that people with disability are not disadvantaged through being required to provide an incomplete picture of their financial position.

That the amended policy is communicated to ADHC staff, funded organisations and disability service users.

Recommendation 20

75

That the Minister for Disability Services introduce standardised income/means testing forms across all ADHC provided and funded programs and ensures forms are available in multiple languages and formats.

Recommendation 21

81

That the Minister for Disability Services expedite the review of the intake and assessment process for disability services to:

- develop a single, well-defined and clear entry point into the service system
- prevent duplicate needs assessments being completed, through not requiring ADHC to complete an assessment when one has been completed by the referring professional
- provide immediate notification of eligibility and entitlement for ADHC provided and funded services
- develop and implement a consistent intake and assessment policy across regions
- improve navigation of intake and assessment, including the provision of clear information about service options, eligibility and support
- review the eligibility criteria for the Attendant Care Program.

That the outcomes of the review, recommendations and ADHC's response to the recommendations are published on ADHC's website.

Recommendation 22

85

That the Minister for Disability Services review and amend ADHC's vacancy management system for supported accommodation in consultation with stakeholders. That the review considers:

- person-centred policy
- access to supported accommodation based on need rather than disability type
- complexity of the application process
- the distance that service users are placed from their family and community
- the compatibility of people placed together in supported accommodation
- the level of choice that service users have regarding where they live, who they live with and who supports them
- compliance with the NSW Disability Service Standards and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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- provision for information sharing and co-ordination of data exchange between ADHC and NGO service providers.

That the outcomes of the review, recommendations and actions are published on ADHC's website.

Recommendation 23

88

That the Minister for Disability Services improve access to disability service information for all service types, programs and supports. That this is achieved through:

- ensuring information is available and easily accessible on all ADHC provided and funded services, including locations where the services are provided, eligibility criteria and how to access the service
- providing information in a variety of formats, including Easy Access, non-English languages, electronically and in hard copy
- providing references to other reputable sources of information, such as websites and organisations, that can provide support and general information to service users, carers and their families.

Recommendation 24

89

That the Minister for Disability Services improve the availability of information to people who are deaf or those with vision disability through making available disability service information in relevant formats.

Recommendation 25

93

That the Minister for Disability Services convene a Working Group made up of government departments, NGO service providers, representatives from the Disability Council of NSW and other stakeholders, to complete a review of eligibility criteria for all services, based on an internationally valid framework such as the WHO's International Classification of Disability Functioning and Health. That revised eligibility criteria determine service eligibility based on need rather than disability.

That the Working Group undertakes consultation with a range of ADHC service users and ensure eligibility criteria are consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

That the outcomes of the review, recommendations and actions are published on ADHC's website.

Recommendation 26

93

That the Minister for Disability Services develop (or revise as appropriate) and consistently implement eligibility policy for all funded and provided service, including the development and implementation of a common eligibility screening tool, and that the policy ensures that service users' are immediately notified of their eligibility and entitlement to ADHC funded and provided services.

Recommendation 27

94

That the Minister for Disability Services amend the eligibility criteria of the attendant care program as a matter of urgency to include people who are deaf and blind.

- Recommendation 28** **94**
That the Minister for Disability Services ensure that appropriate services are available for people who are deaf blind, through funding and training interpreters and guides for deaf and blind service users.
- Recommendation 29** **97**
That the Minister for Disability Services develop a policy regarding the use of waiting lists in ADHC provided and funded services, to improve transparency and understanding of waiting list through:
- providing clear direction on when waiting lists will be kept by ADHC and funded organisations
 - providing direction on how waiting lists will be maintained
 - identifying when, how and the frequency that service users will be communicated with regarding their position on the waiting list
 - reducing the amount of red tape in accessing waiting lists
 - communicating that waiting lists will not negatively impact funded organisations' relationship with ADHC
 - being circulated to service providers, ADHC staff and peak organisations so there is a common understanding across the sector.
- Recommendation 30** **105**
That the Minister for Disability Services consider the Western Australia local area coordinator model of service delivery and implements the model in NSW if appropriate.
- Recommendation 31** **106**
That the Minister for Disability Services provide culturally appropriate disability services information.
- Recommendation 32** **106**
That the Minister for Disability Services provide free interpreter services to people with disability from non-English speaking backgrounds.
- Recommendation 33** **106**
That the Minister for Disability Services ensure that all staff in ADHC funded and provided services receive cultural competency training to enable them to work effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from a non-English speaking background.
- Recommendation 34** **106**
That the Minister for Disability Services incorporate diversity measures and outcomes in all program guidelines.
- Recommendation 35** **116**
That the Minister for Disability Services increase the number of supported accommodation options available as a priority, through phase two of Stronger Together to meet the need on the Register and the anticipated ongoing, growing demand.
- Recommendation 36** **116**
That Ageing, Disability and Home Care regularly communicate with all families on the Register of Requests for Supported Accommodation to assess their eligibility for supported

accommodation, communicate how long the anticipated wait is and to ensure that families receive an appropriate level of support while waiting for accommodation.

That in cases where a family has remained on the Register of Requests for Supported Accommodation for more than six months, ADHC is to advise the Minister of the unfulfilled request.

Recommendation 37 **121**

That the Minister for Disability Services establish an out-of-office hours staff member in all regions to coordinate after hours changes to service delivery for all ADHC provided home care programs. That this staff member communicates with service users when there are after hours changes to service provision.

Recommendation 38 **121**

That the Minister for Disability Services ensure that all relevant staff are aware of current policy and procedures in the home care program, to improve consistency in this program across regions, through the implementation of regular training.

Recommendation 39 **122**

That the Minister for Disability Services ensure that there are HACC staff available in every region who are trained to communicate with, understand and respond to the needs of deaf people.

Recommendation 40 **125**

That the Government ensures community transport concerns are addressed, particularly the need to make the service more person-centered, as a priority through the phase two of Stronger Together.

Recommendation 41 **131**

That the NSW Government investigate the implementation of a program of interest free loans for equipment and aids for ADHC service users and other people with disabilities.

Recommendation 42 **144**

That the Minister for Disability Services maximise the devolution of Large Residential Centre through providing person-centered planning and support for every service user who is currently housed in these centres, and that:

- accommodation needs and preferences of individuals are the centre of decisions to relocate residents.
- all accommodation options offered to service users transitioning out of Large Residential Centres, complies with the NSW Disability Service Standards, *Disability Services Act 1993* and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Recommendation 43 **145**

That the Minister for Disability Services ensures that service users who are transitioned out of Large Residential Centres are adequately supported during the transition period and while they settle into their new accommodation.

Recommendation 44**156**

That the NSW Government ensure that the current evaluation of the ADHC funded Home Modification and Maintenance program includes consultation with stakeholders and includes review of:

- funding levels and shortages
- waiting lists, including for Occupational Therapist assessments
- potential non-compliance with the *Home Building Act 1989*, including the use of unlicensed builders
- options to streamline the application process for home modification services so that only one application is required from service users for assessment, quotation and home modification
- quality evaluation of services provided through the program
- options for home modification and maintenance service providers to provide waiting list information to ADHC, for example regarding unmet need
- review of all outstanding applications that have received an assessment and quotation but have not been completed.

That the evaluation and ADHC's response to the recommendations is published on ADHC's website once finalised.

Recommendation 45**167**

That the Minister for Disability Services revises the NSW Disability Service Standards to include a new standard that requires culturally appropriate services to be delivered.

Recommendation 46**180**

That the Minister for Disability Services conduct a review of complaint and grievance handling policy and procedures for disability services in NSW, and that the review:

- be conducted in consultation with relevant stakeholders including service users and carers
- provides ADHC complaint policy in a format that is accessible to all service users, including people who are deaf and visually impaired
- ensures ADHC complaint policy is easy to locate on the internet
- develops processes to ensure that complaints are addressed in a timely manner
- refers to the NSW Ombudsman Complaint Handling at Universities: Best Practice Guidelines when identifying how to improve complaint handling policies and processes
- identifies and addresses gaps in complaint handling between agencies such as ADHC and the NSW Ombudsman
- implements staff training and develops appropriate resources for funded organisations to improve understanding of complaint handling processes.

That the review report and actions resulting from the review are published on ADHC's website.

Recommendation 47**180**

That the NSW Government establish an independent organisation to:

- monitor the quality of disability services provided and funded by ADHC
- handle complaints about the provision of services (for issues that are not within the responsibility of organisations such as the NSW Ombudsman)
- monitor compliance with the NSW Disability Service Standards and the *Disability Services Act 1993* through providing accreditation to organisations that provide disability services in accordance with the standards.

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- Recommendation 48** 186
That the NSW Government move funding administration of advocacy services to a Department that is independent of disability service provision.
- Recommendation 49** 191
That the Minister for Disability Services conduct a survey of all service users, carers and their families who receive services from ADHC and funded organisations every three years to improve ADHC's understanding of issues in the disability service system.

That the results of the survey and ADHC's response to the results are published within six months after completion of the survey.
- Recommendation 50** 193
That the Minister for Disability Services ensure that people with disability who reside in boarding houses receive person-centred planning and that the services provided to people who reside in boarding houses comply with the NSW Disability Service Standards.
- Recommendation 51** 236
That six months before the end of funding of the Workforce Recruitment Strategy, ADHC, with the assistance of stakeholders, review the strategy in consultation with stakeholders, with a view to extending it for a further two years.
- Recommendation 52** 238
That ADHC convene a cross sector working party to develop a workforce retention strategy. This strategy should include, but not be limited to, issues of:
- career pathways
 - professional development
 - working conditions
 - appropriate remuneration levels.
- Recommendation 53** 243
That the Home Care Service of NSW undertake an evaluation of training levels of all care workers, which identifies training gaps and how these will be addressed.
- Recommendation 54** 243
That ADHC coordinate and share training programs and opportunities with both their own staff and that of non-government service providers in each of the six ADHC regions.
- Recommendation 55** 247
That the Minister for Disability Services investigate the cost of providing ageing and disability services in metropolitan and rural areas of NSW, with a view to increasing the funding allocation to ensure equity of service provision in rural areas, if required.