

PEACE OF MIND *IS THAT TOO MUCH TO ASK FOR?*

VALID

As part of our continuing efforts on unmet need, VALID representatives Matt Dunlop and Kevin Stone made representations to Government Ministers attending the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement meeting in Brisbane yesterday, April 3rd. They had one-on-one discussions with Federal Minister Mal Brough MP and State Minister Gavan Jennings, as part of a national campaign by the CSTDA Alliance, supported by NCID.

Matt (77) and Dawn (74) Dunlop have a very simple request. They are not asking for much. After 50 years of caring for their daughter Gayle, they are simply asking for the support to allow her to continue living in her own family home when they are no longer around.

They are asking for the peace of mind that would come from knowing that disability services are adequately resourced and sufficiently flexible to allow such a simple request to be met. Instead, they are wracked with insecurity and uncertainty, and faced with political buck-passing between governments and politicians - and that's an absolute disgrace.

As Matt says, *“Gayle loves her family, and we love her. This is her home, and she has a right to live out her life here, even after we’ve gone. But Gayle has high support needs and some challenging behaviours, so we want a service capable of offering a live-in position with the guidance and support of our broader family, in a reliably and professionally managed arrangement.*

“As a family, we want to be involved and have direction over the planning process, and in ensuring things are run properly. We need to know there is stability and security for Gayle when we are no longer around to look out for her, and we need to know Governments are planning properly for people like her. Is that too much to ask?”



Round One goes to....?

Yesterday's meeting of Federal and State Ministers to negotiate a fourth Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement ended in a predictable nil-all draw - with people with disabilities and families being the biggest losers.

The only glimmer of hope was a promise made by Federal Minister Mal Brough, made to people with disabilities and parents who met with him both prior and at the conclusion of the meeting, that he would take to Federal Cabinet a proposal to match “dollar for dollar” any offer made by State Governments to fund unmet needs.

Unfortunately, the offer comes with many clauses. Before that would happen, he would firstly have to be satisfied that the data on unmet needs produced by the States was “robust”, and that the measures used to monitor progress were “transparent”. Which leads us back into the same blame-shifting game we've seen for the last fifteen years.

However, this was round one. The combatants have gone back into their corners to prepare for the next round of talks, possibly in four weeks. One positive outcome from yesterday was that at least the Federal Government is conceding (at least to us!) the need to put more money into unmet need.

*See NCID Statement
over page*

NCID Media Statement

3 April 2007

Hope for a new beginning for people with disability and their families

The Commonwealth and State/Territory Disability Ministers met today in Brisbane to begin the negotiations for the 4th Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA).

The meeting ended abruptly after the Commonwealth and States/Territories put their respective positions and could not reach an agreed position.

The Australian Government's position is that the States/Territories must produce good data on unmet need for accommodation support and state how much they are prepared to fund. The Australian Government has committed to match, dollar for dollar, the funding required to address unmet need for accommodation support. The Australian Government also stated that it was prepared to negotiate with individual States and Territories if it could not get a combined Agreement.

The States were unanimous in their concern that this would see the demise of the CSTDA. They were also strongly of the view that the Australian Government should specify what money they are prepared to contribute. The States concluded the meeting and asked for another meeting within three to four weeks.

NCID's Board congratulates our members who participated in the lobbying that has led up to the Ministers' meeting. In our CSTDA Statement NCID urged the Commonwealth to address unmet need and to commit to a 50/50 split in funding the identified unmet need. The Commonwealth's acceptance of NCID's position is a welcome beginning. But it is only a beginning. The Commonwealth's position must not disadvantage any State or Territory, in particular, those States and Territories that have provided considerable support to people with disability over the years.

NCID calls on the States and Territories to release their best data on unmet need for accommodation support so that they and the Commonwealth can assess the cost of meeting all unmet need. Until the data is known neither the Commonwealth nor the States should make a funding offer that may fall short of what is needed.

The Commonwealth's offer is significant and holds the promise for people with disability and their families to at last have their needs met without endless struggle, but, there is a great deal of work to do. The Commonwealth and States/Territories must now engage constructively with each other to plan to address all unmet need, including therapy services and alternatives to employment. In addition the Commonwealth and States/Territories additional funding must include indexation and growth.

Contact: Mark Pattison, NCID Executive Director 0407 406 647



Federal Minister Mal Brough meets the protestors.



A national delegation meets the Ministers.



Matt carries our flag.



Victorian Minister Gavan Jennings hears the issues.



The signs say it all.