



National Disability Services

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

NDS Western Australia
Submission to the Inquiry into the Policy
Implications of an Ageing Community

20 June 2014

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1. Purpose

This submission addresses the terms of reference of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee Inquiry into the policy implications of an ageing community with a focus on protecting the interests and equity rights of people with disability in Western Australia.

2. About National Disability Services Western Australia

NDS WA is the peak disability sector organisation in Western Australia. NDS WA has over 80 organisational members providing services in metropolitan, regional and remote areas across the State. Collectively, these members provide services to thousands of West Australians with a disability and their families and carers. The areas of activity include personal care, accommodation, employment, therapy, sport, recreation and advocacy. The reach of NDS WA is further extended through its administration of programs such as the ACROD Parking, Companion Card and the Community Living and Participation Grants.

3. Introduction

The Community Development and Justice Standing Committee is conducting a review into the into the policy implications of an ageing community.

The terms of reference for the review are to examine the effectiveness of the seniors Strategic Planning Framework 2012-2017 in guiding policies and programs to create age friendly communities throughout the State. The review will also examine the extent to which age friendly communities have been established with a reporting framework to the Legislative Assembly by 25 September 2014.

NDS WA notes that the five policy directions contained in An Age-friendly WA: The Seniors Strategic Planning Framework 2012-2017 are:

- promoting health and wellbeing;
- access to essential services;
- economic security and protection of rights;
- welcoming and well-planned communities; and
- opportunities to contribute.

4. Major Issues

NDS WA highlights the following issues on which we wish to make comment.

4.1 The interaction between people with disability and the aged.

Western Australia has an ageing population, with seniors expected to make up 25 per cent of the population by 2040. In WA, 17 per cent of the population is older than 60. This is expected to increase to more than 21 per cent by 2020. By 2040, one in four West Australians will be 60 years of age or older.

Living with a disability is a significant and mainstream part of life that directly affects more than a quarter of the Western Australian population. Almost one in five Western Australians live with a disability many who are aged 65 years or over.

In 2009, about 382,300 people or 17 per cent of people in WA were reported as having a disability. Of these people, 106,000 or five per cent of people in WA had a severe or profound disability (ABS, 2012). These figures are very similar to those across the nation (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012, p. 48). The figure in WA for people aged 15 to 64 years was slightly lower at 14 per cent while a significant 49 per cent of people aged 65 or over lived with a severe or profound disability (ABS, 2012).

Given the prevalence of disability increases with age there is a common thread around the lower economic and social participation of the aged and people with disability in our community and in particular the policy responses that are needed to address current service gaps.

While recognising that An Age-friendly WA: The Seniors Strategic Planning Framework 2012-2017 provides a strategic vision for the future, there remains significant gaps in areas of service delivery for ageing people with disability and no dedicated funding to meet their specific challenges with respect to access to community facilities, appropriate housing and health and well-being.

4.2 Areas of common priority for people with disability and the aged

NDS WA through its 2014-15 Pre Budget Submission to the State Government has highlighted the following funding priorities for people with disability requiring urgent action that are even more critical to older people with disability.

- Accessibility to community facilities;
- Suitable and affordable housing and accommodation;
- and
- Improved health and wellbeing.

4.2.1 Accessibility to community facilities

NDS WA highlights to the Community Development and Justice Committee our concerns about the monitoring and enforcement of the ACROD parking bays for people with disability.

NDS WA administers the ACROD Parking program on behalf of the Government of Western Australia. In 2013, the State Government announced it would fund the administration fee of the ACROD parking permits as part of a four year \$3.7 million commitment. NDS WA welcomed this announcement as a great outcome for Western Australians permit holders and will certainly make a significant difference to the many people and families who require ACROD parking to access their community. For over 25 years, the ACROD Parking program has played a pivotal role in providing social inclusion opportunities for people with a mobility disability, through providing better community access, including opportunities for employment and leisure.

The program supports over 67,000 Western Australians with a mobility disability to access their community. Providing ACROD parking permits to people who use a mobility aid or who have a severe walking restriction, allows permit holders to participate in the community and attend work, medical appointments, leisure activities and other daily activities.

Of interest to the Community Development and Justice Committee is that older people with disability (those over 65 years) comprise 79% of all Western Australia ACROD permit holders or 4 out of 5 permit holders. With an ageing population and associated increases in the prevalence of disability, the demand for ACROD parking will continue to rise. NDS WA receives approximately 1,000 new applications per month, and this number continues to grow.

NDS WA is concerned that the monitoring and enforcement of fines to ensure that ACROD permit holders have full access to designated parking bays at all times is under resourced. There is no consistent fines regime across the range of available community ACROD bays to deter the misuse of these parking bays by people with no disability.

NDS WA supports an increase in fines to \$1,000 to ensure that permit holders have full access to community services at all times. In addition, a more rigorous monitoring regime of bays needs to be implemented which is supported by appropriate resourcing from the State Government.

4.2.2 Suitable and affordable housing and accommodation

The 2014-15 NDS WA Pre Budget Submission highlighted critical housing tenure and ownership issues for people with disability in Western Australia which particularly have relevance for older people with disability.

Key specific recommendations from the Submission include the following:

- Provide funding to develop a Disability Housing Strategy for Western Australia; a social housing policy and funding framework which recognises and addresses the specific needs of people with disability. This should include funding for the development of a demand model for disability housing in Western Australia;
- Provide funding to ensure that the State Government Affordable Housing Strategy target to achieve 20,000 homes by 2020 complies with universal building design principles;
- Incorporate universal building design principles into all public and social housing;
- Mandate that all Department of Housing contracts with developers incorporate universal building design principles for social and community housing;
- Encourage private developers to build a number of 'Liveable' Housing demonstration or display houses to promote the uptake of universal building design principles in building design. This would include funding to promote the universal building design principles and 'Liveable' Housing demonstration house to builders and potential consumers;
- Standardise building codes to reduce building costs for disability housing; and
- Provide stamp duty exemptions or concessions for people with a disability purchasing property to as an incentive to enter the home ownership market.

NDS WA has engaged Curtin University to undertake a research study to identify the key challenges to home ownership and affordability for Western Australians with disability. The NDS WA Housing Ownership and Affordability for People Living with Disability project addressed the following issues:

- Identify current housing options in Western Australia for people with disability and barriers to access;
- Research suitable models in Australia and internationally;

- Identify how existing programs and structures could be utilised in the project;
- Identify groups of people with disability for whom home ownership is not a viable solution for their housing needs and articulate potential innovative solutions;
- Propose suitable home ownership and affordability models for people with disability; and
- Identify the resources and skill requirements to implement the proposed models and strategies.

The findings of this research will inform the 2015-16 NDS WA Pre Budget Submission to develop key policy directions, strategies and financial solutions to overcome barriers to home ownership and affordability for Western Australians with disability.

4.2.3 Improved health and wellbeing for older people with disability

NDS WA has highlighted in our 2014-15 Pre Budget Submission to the State Government that there is a wide range of critical issues related to the health of people with disability across Western Australia that require resolution. These are even more critical for older people with disability.

Of particular concern is that adults with intellectual disability are at high risk for falls, and they are a major health problem among older people living in community settings. An ongoing longitudinal health and intellectual disability study identified:

- One in three adults with intellectual disability aged 45-64 experienced at least one fall in the preceding year which is comparable to the frequency of falls among elderly people (aged 65 and older) without disability;
- 43 per cent of adults with intellectual disability aged 65 and older experienced at least one fall in the preceding year;
- 24 per cent of those who experienced falls needed medical care;
- Women had a 43 per cent higher fall rate than men when taking age into account. Being female, having arthritis, having a seizure disorder, polypharmacy (taking more than four medications), using walking aids, and having difficulty lifting or carrying over 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms) were risk factors for falls;
- For those who did not have a seizure disorder, having more severe intellectual disability, arthritis, heart condition, back pain, urinary

incontinence, using a walking aid, and difficulty walking three blocks were risk factors for falls; and,

- For those who required medical care, having osteoporosis, back pain, and urinary incontinence were risk factors for falls.

NDS WA has provided the following funding recommendations to address the critical issues related to the health of people with disability across Western Australia that require resolution, many of which are even more significant for older people with disability. These include investing in a range of health promotion and intervention programs to redress the health inequities of people with disability including:

- Targeted health promotion campaigns that develop the health literacy of people with disability, their families and carers, and raise the awareness of the health issues faced by people with disability;
- Annual health checks for people with disability; and
- Postgraduate programs for health care professionals to raise awareness and skill to redress health inequities experienced by people with disability.