

**Submission
No 1**

**FIFTH REVIEW OF THE EXERCISE OF THE FUNCTIONS
OF THE LIFETIME CARE AND SUPPORT AUTHORITY**

Organisation: Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS)

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REVIEW OF THE EXERCISE OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE LIFETIME CARE AND SUPPORT AUTHORITY

About NCOSS

The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) is the peak body for the non-government human services sector in NSW. Through its organisational membership, NCOSS represents a vast network of service delivery and consumer groups. NCOSS has a vision of a society where there is social and economic equity, based on cooperation, participation, sustainability and respect. We work with our members, the NSW Government and other relevant agencies, towards achieving this vision in New South Wales.

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the review of the exercise of the functions of the Lifetime Care and Support Authority.

NCOSS consulted the Assistive Technology Community Alliance NSW and the NSW Disability Network Forum to gather information for our response to this Review. NCOSS convenes the Assistive Technology Community Alliance NSW whose members range from suppliers, professional bodies to service providers and representative organisations of people with disability. NCOSS also convenes the NSW Disability Network Forum comprising non-government, non-provider peak representative groups whose primary aim is to promote the interests of people with disability.

Many of the members contacted had little or no contact with the Lifetime Care and Support Authority (LTCSA) and so provided no feedback. Several member organisations provided summary feedback to NCOSS and other organisations will be providing more detailed submissions directly to the Review.

Positive engagement with LTCSA

The feedback received was generally very positive regarding engagement and interaction with LTCSA.

Respondents claimed that responses from LTCSA are generally prompt, including payments, and there are normally few problems. There were some reports of the need from therapists for more justifications for equipment than previously, but this was not a strong criticism. When compared with the requirements of/engagements with EnableNSW, respondents commented favourably, asking why EnableNSW could not operate more like LTCSA.

Employment of family members as Attendant Care workers

LTCSA's decision not to pay family members as attendant care workers demonstrates a consideration of the impacts of the caring role on family members. However, it was felt that exceptions could be explored for families where, for cultural or other reasons and with the consent of the person with disability, paying a family member as an attendant care worker could be more appropriate than employing an external attendant care worker. These exceptions include where the person is from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community, or from a culturally and linguistically diverse background or for people in families living in rural or remote areas where there may be limited choice of providers.

Quality and selection of Attendant Care workers

For people with disability using Attendant Care Services, increased quality and choice of workers and case managers can be critical for rehabilitation and wellbeing outcomes as well as for the wellbeing and peace of mind of family members and carers. LTCSA is congratulated for its various efforts towards increasing the skills base and competence of attendant care workers and case managers, and towards increasing the opportunity for participants to select their attendant care workers and case managers.

Sargood Centre and carer support

LTCSA's contribution to the development of the Sargood Centre on the Northern Beaches - set to open in 2015 - was welcomed, as well as LTCSA's support of the Centre's emphasis on holistic rehabilitation, and a whole-of-family approach to education and capacity building. The Sargood Centre should have carer support and education as an intentional focus, and should refer carers to external services of benefit to them, such as those provided by Carers NSW and the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres.

More effective processes and person-centred focus

NCOSS received some feedback from therapists in member organisations who suggested that, while LTCSA processes were generally good, there was room for improvement, particularly in relation to more effective assessment and approval processes to reduce waiting times for people with disability and to advance a person-centred focus.

Advocacy and Information

NCOSS has been focussing on the importance of independent advocacy and information alongside the provision of necessary supports to people with disability. The provision of timely, non-aligned, free-of-charge information and advocacy to support people with disability and their families at critical times could mean the difference between effective supports with quality life outcomes as compared to lack of support, having to 'make do', unnecessary dependence on others and undue stress. LTCSA's engagement with and support for independent advocacy and information agencies will assist with furthering understanding of this important function.

Complaints handling

NCOSS received input that complaints handling by LTCSA was not as thorough as desirable, and that the process for looking into issues raised by complaints should be more comprehensive, in order to effectively resolve them. LTCSA's complaints handling processes could also be improved by the involvement of external advocates where appropriate.

People with disability as participants on the LTCSA Council

NCOSS strongly urges that the recommendation to appoint two participant representatives to the LTCSA Council, as set out in the Second Review Report and supported by the Third Review Report, is immediately actioned. NCOSS believes that, in line with NSW and Australian Government policy, people with disability should have direct input into the decisions that affect their lives. Participant representatives would provide unique and valuable insight to the Council on policy, management and operational matters. This action is now unacceptably overdue.

Decision-making capacity

The National Disability Insurance Scheme legislation clearly identifies that the first assumption regarding decision-making by a person with disability is that the person has capacity to make decisions. For people requiring assistance with decisions, supported decision-making processes should be used. NCOSS has received feedback that substitute decision-making may not always produce the best outcomes for the person with disability and in some instances may not even involve them or may become an unnecessary default position. The use of this process should be regularly reviewed. Further, NCOSS recommends that LTCSA undertake research into the role and appropriate use of substitute decision-making to ensure best practice.

Conclusion

NCOSS appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the review of the exercise of the functions of the Lifetime Care and Support Authority.

If you require any further information or clarification, please contact NCOSS,
