

Polio Australia

Representing polio survivors throughout Australia

National Patron: Dr John Tierney PhD OAM, Federal Senator for NSW 1991 – 2005

Critical comments invited on the draft Programme Manual for the new Commonwealth Continuity of Support (CoS) Programme

Response from Polio Australia Incorporated

Prepared by Dr Margaret Cooper PhD

Polio Australia commends the introduction of the Continuity of Support Programme (CoSP) - Specialist Disability Services for Older People as discussed in the Draft Manual for Service Providers 2016.

Polio Australia www.polioaustralia.org.au is the national voice for the estimated 400,000 survivors of polio, the majority of whom live with varying degrees of paralysis, post-polio syndrome and late effects of polio¹. Those in our cohort continue to participate fully in community life as seen in this short film by Heather Walker:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YpfQQWHEVo

Polio Australia's Board is made up of the six state based Polio Networks who support their own post-polio members. We are also linked into international polio-related peak bodies, and associated health professionals.

Polio Australia appreciates the CoSP has been designed to align with disability reform processes, the Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons, and legislation overseen by the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Attorney-General's Department. However, we do have some concerns relating to:

- Clarification of the meaning of the phrase 'similar outcomes', which is mentioned in the Foreword line 6 and is also used in section 1.2 Objectives. Some of our members struggle to be as independent as possible. Any reduction in support, such as no disability service at weekends, creates great stress.
- Lack of recognition that financial stress may be caused by client fees. Individual Support Packages may not cover increased wages for support workers or service providers' costs. This means people requiring care on weekends will have to pay the full amount of support. The older cohort of survivors did not have equal access to superannuation schemes and have no ability to afford extra charges.

¹ Jubelt, B., & Agre, J. (2000). Characteristics and Management of Post-polio syndrome. *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 284 (4), 412-414. <http://www.jama.com/doi:10.1001/jama.84.4.412>

Taxation changes mean that rebates have changed dramatically and negatively for individual and family health and disability expenditure.

- Development of an assistive technology strategy coupled with a related information process to all service providers. There is great uncertainty about whether assistive technology, customised calipers and power chairs for example, will be subsidised.
- Apparent delay in the introduction of national quality control protocols. We are all aware of published physical and financial abuses which have occurred in both the disability and aged care systems.
- Assumption that one programme suits all. This statement under Outcomes seems to indicate an inevitable transition into the inflexible, lifelong or long-term disability-inexperienced, aged care system.

'the wellbeing of this cohort of older people with disability is maintained through the delivery of consistent, timely, high quality services and supported transition into appropriate programmes such as aged care as their circumstances change . . .'

Polio Australia recommends very careful monitoring of disability service providers' unloading of customers into aged care, rather than enabling people to age in place.

- Confusion about eligibility for CoSP: Under the current guide *'persons who are existing clients of State-administered specialist disability services at the time the CoS Programme commences in their region'* are eligible. This included a person who *'is receiving state administered specialist disability services or has a booking/s for these services with a service provider at the time the CoS Programme is implemented in their region. This could include having a set date and time when services will be delivered being agreed even though services may not have commenced'*. That seems to indicate waiting for services however the Manual goes on to read *'the CoS Programme does not include people on waiting lists for State-administered specialist disability services.'*

Polio Australia looks forward to these concerns being addressed in the Manual for Service Providers 2016.

Yours sincerely,



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Polio Australia

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