

## Media release – exclusion from NDIS is blatant discrimination

Polio Australia, the national peak body representing tens of thousands of people in Australia with disability as a result of polio, is calling on the government to remove the discriminatory exclusion of people with disability over the age of 65 from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The organisation has forwarded a submission to the Disability Royal Commission condemning this exclusion, which is a source of frustration for thousands of people with disability in Australia unable to access adequate funding assistance for much-needed services, support and equipment.

In the middle of the last century, polio swept across the country in epidemics that caused paralysis for as many as 40,000 people, mainly young children. Since that time, thousands of Australians have lived with significant physical disability. The NDIS, if it had been around earlier, would have provided these survivors of polio with much-needed financial support to purchase aids and equipment. It would have helped them to maximise their participation in employment and community activities. And it would have provided help with daily living tasks for those who needed it. However, for almost all of Australia's polio survivors, the NDIS has come too late.

With the NDIS rolling out in different locations across the country, some have missed the age cut-off by only days or weeks. Others, due to an increase of disability caused by the Late Effects of Polio, have not required any assistance until after they reached the age of exclusion.

People with disability who join the NDIS before they turn 65 are given the option to stay with the scheme for life. However, those who have already passed this age at the time they wish to access the NDIS are automatically ineligible, shunted instead onto the grossly-inadequate aged care services. While systems such as My Aged Care provide valuable services for those simply becoming frail with age, they fall far short of providing for the complex needs of people with disability.

Gillian Thomas is Polio Australia's president, and also a polio survivor who is not eligible for the NDIS despite significant physical disability since childhood. Ms Thomas lost eligibility due to the timing of the roll-out in her area. She says: "People who were lucky enough to get onto the NDIS before they turned 65 can stay on it for life, but the rest of us miss out because of a trick of timing. It's ridiculous."

*Polio Australia is committed to standardising quality post-polio information across Australia. Our vision is that all polio survivors in Australia have access to appropriate health care and the support required to maintain independence and make informed life choices.*