

## BLITS E-Newsletter February 2012

### Welcome to the first BLITS E-News of 2012.



In this edition we present an article on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), one of a number of key recommendations to emerge from the Productivity Commissions Report on the inquiry into Disability Care and Support in Australia.

We provide a snapshot of actions and progress specific to the development of the NDIS since the report was released in August 2011 and an interview with a key proponent of the inquiry and a member of the reformed NDIS Advisory Group, Dr Rhonda Galbally, AO . In this article we focus primarily on the NDIS development progress.

In November last year we congratulated all the winners and nominees of the 2011 Chief Ministers Inclusion Awards, but we cannot resist the opportunity to share some of the images from this outstanding event with you in this newsletter.

For a complete list of nominees, finalists, winners and photos of the presentation night go to: [www.blits.org.au/inclusion-awards.php](http://www.blits.org.au/inclusion-awards.php)

I also wish to advise that this will be my last E-Newsletter as Chair of BLITS. I will be handing over my Chairperson role to Mr Graham Hambleton. I have been privileged to serve People with Disability through this vibrant and knowledgeable advisory board and the contact I have had with many people in the business, sports and arts industry.

I thank you all for your participation and commitment to the BLITS purpose and objectives and look forward to working with you in other arenas.

Yours sincerely,

Lois Ford

Chair

ACT BLITS

---

### Introducing the New Chair of BLITS

The new Chair of BLITS, Mr Graham Hambleton will be writing directly to readers soon. In the meantime, we are pleased to introduce Mr Hambleton with this short background:

Graham Hambleton has recently joined the BLITS Board, he works as a Director in Disability ACT.

While originally from Melbourne, Graham has spent the last 21 years living in New Zealand, where he has been involved in the Disability Sector for the last 16 years. 10 of those years he was working for one of New Zealand's largest NGOs, of which the last 4½ years he was their National Service Development Manager.

Graham has been involved in the Governance of several NGOs, he was a member of the editorial Board of the NZ Disability Studies journal and a Board member of the Community Support Services Industry Training Organisation.

In his private time you can catch Graham and his wife enjoying the many bike tracks around Canberra. As a keen sports fan he is looking forward to all the variety that Canberra has to offer.

---

### The National Disability Insurance Scheme: 2011 to 2012 - A Progress Snap Shot

As most if not all of our readers would be aware, in August 2011 the Productivity Commission completed an inquiry into Disability Care and Support in Australia and presented the findings to the Commonwealth Government in August last year.

To remind, the Productivity Commission Inquiry was set up to examine:

- \* how a scheme should be designed and funded to better meet the long-term needs of people with disability, their families and carers;
- \* how to determine the people most in need of support, the services that should be available to them, and service delivery arrangements;
- \* the costs, benefits, feasibility and funding options of alternative schemes;
- \* how the scheme will interact with the health, aged care, informal care, income support and injury insurance systems;
- \* its impacts on the workforce;
- \* how any scheme should be introduced and governed; and
- \* what protections and safeguards should be part of the scheme?

The first sentence of the Executive Summary - Disability Care and Support Report #1, summarising the findings of the inquiry encapsulates both the importance and the scale of the task at hand:

'The current disability support system is underfunded, unfair, fragmented, and inefficient. It gives people with a disability little choice, no certainty of access to appropriate supports and little scope to participate in the community.'

(related reports are available at: [www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/disability-support/report](http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/disability-support/report) )

## **NDIS - An Activity Time Line**

### **What has transpired since the adoption of the Productivity Commission Report into Disability Care and Support in Australia?**

The following time line provides an overview of the answer to this question:

#### **August 2011**

- Productivity Commission provides NDIS report to Government ;
- Prime Minister Julia Gillard endorses and releases the Commission's report; and
- Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorses report :
  - o COAG strongly endorses the Commission's findings that major reform of disability care and support is needed through a National Disability Insurance Scheme;
  - o sets up COAG Select Council to progress the reform; and
  - o directs the select Council to report on progress at first meeting in 2012.

#### **October 2011**

- The NDIS Advisory Group is formed:

This group includes Advisory Group Chair Dr Jeff Harmer AO, Dr Rhonda Galbally AO, Mr Bruce Bonyhady AM, Dr Ken Baker, Dr Lorna Hallahan, Ms Joan McKenna-Kerr, Mr Brendan O'Reilly and Ms Fran Vickery;(for more detail: [www.ndis.gov.au/ndis-advisory-group](http://www.ndis.gov.au/ndis-advisory-group) )
- COAG Select Council of Ministers meet for the first time; and
- Government announces an additional \$10 Billion committed to the NDIS .

#### **December 2011**

- Minister Jenny Macklin assigned the additional new portfolio of Disability Reform; and
- The Commonwealth announces there will be a launch of NDIS in 2012.

#### **February 2012**

- \$3.1 million dollar support package announced to assist Australian Disability Enterprises prepare for a National Disability Insurance Scheme, including:
  - o \$1.5m capital fund to purchase services or equipment that will assist in readiness for an NDIS;
  - o \$0.5m for a series of training sessions to prepare for a possible move to individualised funding;
  - o \$0.5m for Corporate Governance training for Boards;

- o \$0.1m for a series of eight workshops around Australia where KPMG will provide feedback about the Case Based Funding review to date, explain the proposed model, and gather further feedback;
- o \$0.3m for a best practice forum; and
- o \$0.2 m for materials to assist supported employees and ADEs to understand their obligations in relation to supported employment.

---

## Interview with Dr Rhonda Galbally

BLITS interviewed Dr Rhonda Galbally AO about the formation and future of the National Insurance Disability Scheme.

**Q: Dr Galbally, we understand the scheme is in trial mode, but the period for this trial is said to be seven years and counting...isn't this a very long time to get the program finalised?**

A: The Productivity Commission was very clear that any test period is not about piloting and trialling; it's about roll-out, so what some have referred to as trials are in fact launch sites - these are areas where the scheme is being roll-out initially before being extended to the whole of Australia. I feel it's a strong distinction, and I thought it was great when the Government completely accepted that there would be launch sites. This said, we want to check that things work, checking and continually adjusting and benchmarking as we go - so the focus on the launch sites is important.

**Q: Will there be identified launch sites in 2012?**

A: It's hard to know. I would say by the end of 2012 would be more realistic. I know that the government is very committed to getting this rolling. I've never seen a government respond to any Productivity Commission much less any other recommendatory commissions report so quickly, so they're really keen to get going.

**Q: Dr Galbally, do you believe there remains bipartisan support for the scheme?**

A: When the report first came out there was bipartisan support with the Federal Opposition showing comprehensive backing of the scheme. When the Prime Minister formally released the report and announced the Government's decision to proceed, the Opposition once again expressed support.

Unfortunately, a recent announcement indicates the Opposition has now qualified their support indicating that the delivery of the scheme is dependent on a budget surplus - that the NDIS reforms cannot be fully implemented until the budget returns to strong surplus.

This is extremely disappointing as I see this as a backing away from what was initially a strong and unqualified endorsement. Carers, people with disabilities and Australians generally should hold the opposition to account for their earlier unequivocal support.

Anything short of bipartisan support for the NDIS is a disgrace.

**Q: What sort of reaction to you expect to see from the business community as implementation commences?**

A: Well the Business Council of Australia has supported the NDIS which is really great. I would say that business would be very, very supportive because they've got a lot to gain in a macro-economic sense. This is a model that makes really good economic sense, it gets people participating fully including in work as fully as they can and then people are paying taxes, they're consuming goods and services so it's a really good thing to have people with disabilities out there in the world, so that's number one. Secondly, one of the big issues remaining for Australia is to develop a comprehensively skilled and reliable work force - people with disabilities are excellent employees and employers. People with disabilities are very good business owners too. And so this really does mean that there'll be an additional available stream of our work force and that's definitely very valuable for business. So for business this is good news.

**Q: What are the current risks, what are the likely hurdles and challenges that could emerge that could slow things down?**

A: This is a major Federal system but the States and Territories are a key to success and coordination here will be critical. I think that we've still got a long way to go and some States and Territories are further down the track than others. The States and Territories have by and large been very supportive of going to a national uniform system for the benefit of scheme recipients. Portability of care and support is vital.

We have heard stories during the consultation process for the national disabilities strategy where people who were highly qualified lost jobs because they had to move across state borders and six months later, after they'd been offered new jobs, the packages still hadn't been organised for the support required in the new job. This is a serious breach of human rights.

**Q: Has there been any talk of trying to involve people with a disability within the new job creation strategy that the scheme's going to produce?**

A: At this point this is still on the table for further discussion and remembering it is still early days. In the UK much of the brokerage system at local level for case management is rolled out by people with disabilities and there's no reason why that couldn't happen with this scheme.

I think it's an opportunity for people with disabilities but also there's no reason why people with disabilities could not become support workers for other people with disabilities. There's a lot of things that people with disabilities could do for others and I think that's an area that people with disabilities might want to explore, opening up their own businesses and some people might prefer that model; might prefer to get their services from people with disabilities organisations. So I'm really very hopeful about that and I think that the only thing that will stop that is the imagination and creativity and business skills. So that's another area that will need to be developed and that's training and supporting for establishing business.

**Q: With your business hat on, and harking back to your comments earlier about the benefits to business of the NDIS, I'm assuming that you're saying in that statement that this means that a lot more people potentially can be in the skill based workforce?**

Absolutely, there'll be people with disabilities in the workplace, and there'll be people coming into this work. This will be good for all business environments. The benefits are more specific because number one people with disabilities will be available for work and they are high quality workers, there's a lot of evidence about low rates of absenteeism and correspondingly, high levels of workplace outcomes. There'll be an additional work force effectively. That's people earning money and paying taxes and consuming things. Of course there will be part of this new work force that may include people without disabilities as well, but all of the new workforce won't be people with disabilities. There'll be new business opportunities on the supplier side for a new market place that's never existed. So it will be a genuine market place. There's a lot of up sides for business in this. And it all feeds into an expansion of the Australian economy.

**Q: It seems in the current situation the lack of support and lack of funding for essential care places increased costs on the health system. In the medium to long term will the NDIS deliver cost benefits from a reduced pressure on the health system?**

A: Absolutely and this data is available thanks to the work of John Walsh at PwC. People are in hospital beds when they do not need to be or seeking medical assistance much sooner than they might otherwise. This is extremely expensive and all because there's nowhere for them to go and there's no support package and system in place to ensure they have access to the fundamentals necessary for a good and productive life. I would like to see the health system very engaged with the development of the NDIS this because they have a lot to gain, and their gain is a benefit to all.

**Q: This must be a direct positive trade-off against the cost of the scheme implementation?**

A: Yes and to some extent this is in the Productivity Commission Report. But there is some restriction in Treasury guidelines that prevents taking offsets into account when providing the final costing and budgeting. I think an exception should be made to this rule as the offsets are enormous. In fact the analysis John Walsh has done shows that this scheme will mean that the Government will be well ahead financially.

*A Biography of Dr Rhonda Galbally is available at the end of this newsletter.*

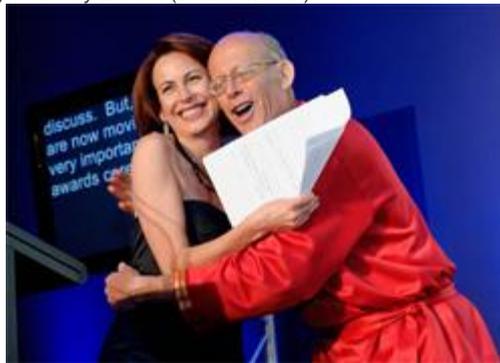
---

## Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards 2012

To view all award presentations and audience images from the 2011 ACT Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards presentation event, go to the photo Gallery at: [www.blits.org.au/inclusion-awards.php](http://www.blits.org.au/inclusion-awards.php)



**Minister Joy Burch MLA presents the Chief Minister's Award for Excellence to the ACT Cricket Association, represented by Matthew Paton.** (l to r) Jeremy Paul, (Ten and a Half Catering), Minister Joy Burch MLA, Matthew Paton, ACT Cricket Association, Christine Shewry and Gay Barton (Drake Medox)



**Master of Ceremonies Virginia Haussegger and pianist David Helfgott celebrate the Awards following the standing ovation for Mr Helfgott's his performance.**

---

## **Dr Rhonda Galbally - Biography**

Dr Rhonda Galbally has focussed her life's work on making a difference for a more equitable society. A CEO for 25 years in the business, philanthropic and government sectors, Rhonda's leadership in finding effective solutions for social, health and economic development culminated in her establishing [www.ourcommunity.com.au](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au) - a hub of resources, training and advice to help improve the operational and governance capacity of Australia's 700,000 community organisations in fundraising, grant-seeking, governance, marketing and formation of partnerships with business and local, state and federal governments.

Rhonda is a member of the National Compact Expert Panel. Before developing Our Community, Rhonda established as the foundation Managing Director, the Australian International Health Institute - now the Nossal Institute in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Melbourne. She is a member of the National Disability Insurance Scheme Advisory Group.

In the late eighties, Rhonda established and for 10 years was the foundation CEO of the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth). This was the first body in the world to use a dedicated tax on tobacco for innovative health promotion and was recognised by the World Health Organisation in 1996. As well as ground-breaking work in areas such as tobacco control, injury prevention, mental health promotion, food and nutrition, exercise and activity and sexual health, Dr Galbally's work at VicHealth has left the legacy of a number of ongoing centres of excellence, which are still having a significant impact on the health of adolescents, indigenous people, people with disabilities, mothers and babies, older people and women.

As Executive Director of the Myer Foundation and Sidney Myer Foundation, Chair of Philanthropy Australia and for 20 years a trustee of the Reichstein Foundation, Rhonda has helped direct large amounts of philanthropic funding into grassroots

community organisations. She is now continuing this work as a member of the Australian Football League Foundation and the State Trustees Charitable Foundation.

Rhonda has always been a strong advocate for a 'rights' based approach to social justice; the stories from these decades of campaigning are strongly and humourlessly expressed in her recently published book by Pluto Press - Just Passions.

As Chair of the Disability Advisory Council of Victoria, the National People with Disabilities and Carers Council, and the Royal Women's Hospital, and as Patron of Compassionate Friends, Rhonda believes that rights campaigns are now more important than ever.

In 2005, Dr Galbally was a member of the four-person Victorian Government Human Rights Committee reporting on the need for a human rights Bill for the Victoria.

#### **Awards and Honours**

- \* 1990, Dr Galbally was awarded an Order of Australia
- \* 1996 the World Health Organisation (Asia Pacific) medal for Tobacco or Health
- \* 1998 the Award of the Latrobe University Degree Doctor of Science (honoris causa)
- \* 2001 the Centenary Medal in recognition of her service to the community
- \* 2006 the RMIT University Award of the Degree Doctor of Social Science (honoris causa)