



Australian Government  
Productivity Commission

# Disability Care and Support

Productivity  
Commission

*The key questions*

17 May 2010

This brief paper aims to help you engage with the Productivity Commission's inquiry into long-term disability care and support. It describes what the inquiry is about and identifies some issues for you to consider. We have also put out a more comprehensive *Issues Paper* that sets out the main questions and issues in more detail. It can be obtained from [www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/disability-support](http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/disability-support) or you can contact us to obtain one. Easy English and Auslan versions of the key questions are also available from our website.

**Commissioners:** Patricia Scott, David Kalisch, John Walsh

## Key dates

Initial public hearings	June/July 2010
Initial submissions due	End June 2010
Release of draft report	February 2011
Second round of submissions due	April 2011
Public hearings for draft report	April 2011
Final report	31 July 2011

## Sending us your ideas:

You can send us your responses by emailing us at [disability-support@pc.gov.au](mailto:disability-support@pc.gov.au), by mail, or in audio or video formats. Our postal address is: Disability Care and Support, Productivity Commission, GPO Box 1428, Canberra City ACT 2601. If you have any queries please contact us on (02) 6240 3221 or Freecall number 1800 020 083.

TTY users please phone 133 677

Speak and Listen users please phone 1300 555 727

Internet relay users please connect to

<http://www.iprelay.com.au/call/index.aspx>

} and then ask for (02) 6240 3221

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## What is this inquiry about?

Reviews of services for people with disabilities have shown many people are frustrated by current arrangements or get insufficient support, and feel alone, angry or depressed as a result. The Australian Government has asked the Commission to look at a new system to improve long-term care and support services for people with disability and their carers and families.

## Having your say

This paper covers some of the key questions that you might want to address. More in-depth issues and questions are in the Commission's Issues Paper. The information you give will help us to prepare a draft report, which we plan to release in February 2011 for public comment. There will then be another set of consultations, before we provide a final report to the Australian Government in July 2011.

You can give us your ideas in many ways. You can:

- make a formal submission (if you would like to do this, you might also find it useful to look at the detailed issues paper on our website and on how to make a submission),
- make a presentation to the commissioners at a formal public hearing.
- provide answers to any or all of the questions in this paper, based on your personal experiences. This is different from a submission. It is not a formal process, so it is easier to do. You do not have to read our detailed instructions on how to make a submission or include our formal cover sheet or tell us details about yourself. Just include the words **PERSONAL RESPONSE** at the start of your comments. You might write just a few lines on a good idea. Because these responses tend to be shorter, we will combine people's ideas into a single document. We will publish the document on our website, but will not publish your name to protect your privacy. We have used personal responses in other inquiries, such as the inquiry into paid parental leave. For example, look at [www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/parentalsupport/personal-responses](http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/parentalsupport/personal-responses). If you are making a more detailed and lengthy response, you might want to think about making a formal submission.

## Improving the system

The key question for the Commission is not how bad the current system is — nearly everyone thinks it needs to be overhauled. What we want to know is how to build a good system. We would like to hear your ideas about the features of a new long-

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term disability care and support scheme, based on your own experiences as a person with a disability, or as a service provider, carer, family member, friend, employer or workmate of a person with a disability. As shown in the chart below, there are many aspects to a scheme's design, and we have to make informed judgments about all of them.

## **Who should be eligible?**

Many millions of Australians have a disability of some kind. Disability comes in many forms, with different impacts and lasts for different lengths of time. Some people need a lot of help, and some a little. Some disabilities last a few years, some wax and wane over time, and others last for the rest of people's lives. Some people have disabilities where early interventions have a large benefit and others not.

**Who should be in the new scheme and how could they be practically and reliably identified?**

**Which groups are most in need of additional support and help?**

**What could be done about reducing unfairness, so that people with similar levels of need get similar levels of support?**

## **Who gets the power?**

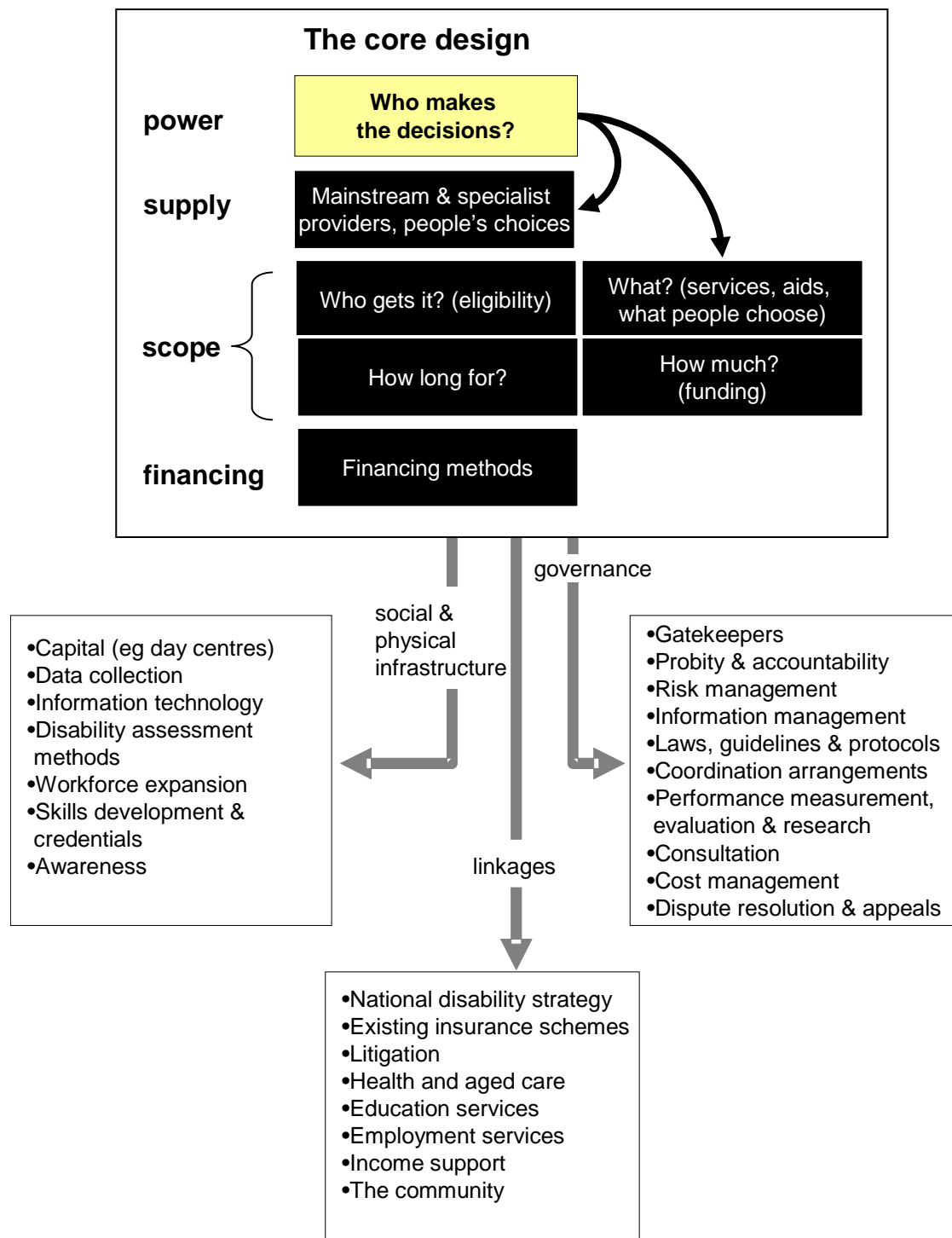
Increasingly, there has been a shift to provide people with disabilities and their carers and families with more control. That might involve giving them control over funding ('individualised funding'), greater choices among services, and an obligation by service providers to take greater account of people's individual needs.

**How could people with disabilities or their carers have more power to make their own decisions (and how could they appeal against decisions by others that they think are wrong)?**

Some decisions will probably still be made by others — such as whether a person is in the scheme or not, or the amount of financial support and services they get.

**How should the amount of financial support and service entitlements of people be decided (and by whom)?**

## The main aspects of any system



## What services are needed and how should they be delivered?

Many services are currently provided, including aids, transport assistance, accommodation, respite and care. But people say that there are not enough services

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and sometimes not the right ones.

**What kinds of services particularly need to be increased or created?**

**How could the ways in which services are delivered — including their coordination, costs, timeliness and innovation — be improved?**

**Are there ways of intervening early to get improved outcomes over people's lifetimes? How would this be done?**

**How could a new scheme encourage the full participation by people with disability and their carers in the community and work?**

**How can a new system ensure that any good aspects of current approaches are preserved?**

**What should be done in rural and remote areas where it is harder to get services?**

**How could a new system get rid of wasteful paper burdens, overlapping assessments (the 'run around') and duplication in the system?**

## **Funding**

A new scheme will need more funding, and people will need to be confident that funding will meet their future as well as current needs. There are many choices about how much funding might be needed and where it would come from. For example, it might come from existing taxes, a new levy or in other ways.

**How should a new scheme be financed?**

**How can it be ensured that there is enough money to deliver the services that are needed and provide greater certainty about adequate care in the future?**

## **Organising and implementing a new disability policy**

A new disability scheme will change the way that people get services and how much they get. That will mean many decisions will have to be made about a new scheme, such as:

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- the roles of service providers, people with disabilities, their carers and governments (eight governments are heavily involved in providing and funding current disability services)
  - how existing arrangements would fit in with a new scheme
  - how risks and costs would be managed to make a scheme sustainable for the future
  - what workers would be needed in a new scheme, where they would come from, what training requirements would be appropriate and what could be done in the short-run to boost their numbers
  - the transitions to a new scheme.

**What are your views about the ‘nitty gritty’ aspects of a scheme that will make it work practically?**

**How long would be needed to start a new scheme, and what should happen in the interim?**

## **You may have many other ideas for a good scheme**

The above questions are only a guide to help you give us your ideas about some of the most important issues.

The more specific and detailed your ideas are, the better. For example, telling us that more money should be provided does not tell us where that is needed, how much, the chief priorities for reform, where the money will come from, how it would be given out, and a host of other important questions that need to be taken into account in building a new system. Your personal responses do not have to be long. A few specific comments or insights in a particular area can be very useful for us.