

Li-Ve Tas Submission – Inquiry into Disability Services in Tasmania 2021

The Inquiry Secretary, Parliament House

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About Li-Ve Tasmania

Li-Ve Tasmania has been supporting Tasmanian's living with disability for over sixty-five years. In 2021 it supports over 300 individuals and employs over 400 staff. Li-Ve Tasmania provide genuine person-centred support to people living with disability in Tasmania. The organisation's portfolio includes 17 group homes, a large residential site, supports to individuals in their homes and a diverse range of community access programs, state-wide. We support participants of all ages with diverse support needs arising from a broad range of disability. Li-Ve Tasmania demonstrates particular expertise in services supporting people living with acquired brain injury and/or dementia, and at end-of-life.

Li-Ve Tasmania will not respond to all terms of reference but focus on those of relevance to the matters we intend to focus. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters further if the opportunity arises.

2. The range of support services available to Tasmanians who are not on, or eligible for, the NDIS.

Oakdale Lodge (The Lodge) was established in 1970 and is still home to 35 residents. Each resident has a separate bedroom and shares common areas. This NDIS and the NDIA as the funding agency are clear that large-scale residential/congregate living sites are not aligned with current policy settings or the aspirations of the scheme for participants in the future. As a result Li-Ve Tasmania is transitioning away from this model and working with residents and families on alternative and appropriate housing. This is a challenging process particularly as some of our residents have been living in this facility as their home for over 30 years, some since it opened.

Of our 35 residents we have 12 who were over 65 years of age at the time of the introduction of the NDIS and the policy response deemed them ineligible to receive NDIS supports and this includes accommodation funding for any move beyond The Lodge.

These older residents of The Lodge are in a vulnerable position. Whilst they have funding for supports from the Commonwealth Department of Health (under the Continuity of Supports program) they do not have any funding for a move to appropriate disability accommodation. This could mean we have to relocate these residents to inappropriate accommodation settings that do not cater for their specific needs where they are ageing with disability. To this date we are unable to receive any prioritisation or special case treatment through Housing Tasmania or from the State Government. When you add to this the current tight housing market in the south of the state, this group has lost the most crucial support, secure housing. This environment has created enormous uncertainty and anxiety for the residents and their families and friends.

3. Funding for organisations that service those not eligible for the NDIS.

As previously mentioned these older residents of The Lodge receive funding through the Commonwealth Department of Health. Li-Ve Tasmania, in addition to this, has to invest resources into critical health care coordination to respond appropriately to the complexities of ageing with disability. This includes the engagement of a Health Support Liaison Officer whose workload has increased eight fold. Considering the importance of integrated care with both the primary care and hospital systems in the state, including avoidance of acute admissions and readmissions and access to quality palliative care we believe responsibility for resourcing the increasing health needs of this group should be shared.

4. Workforce development and training opportunities for the disability support sector, including allied health.

Workforce continues to be a critical issue for our organisation and for the Sector as a whole. Taking a strategic workforce planning approach we work from the basis that ‘right fit’ people to ‘right skills & knowledge’ = quality services to participants and a sustainable businesses.

Aligned with the ongoing implementation of the NDIS and the changing demographic (e.g. increasing health needs, people with disabilities living longer, increased community support) of our participants the skills and knowledge requirements of our workforce continues to grow and change. It is critical for government (as a funder of vocational education and training) to recognise that more importantly it is about quality. Are the people being recruited by RTO’s into the programs (aligned to the qualification) the ‘right people’? In the current environment do the outcomes from the skills and knowledge delivered through ‘the program’ support the delivery of quality services to people accessing supports through Disability Service Providers?

It is important to recognise that in order to achieve the required workforce development outcomes not all vocational training provided to Industry may need to be ‘accredited’. The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (the regulator), through an Industry led process, have developed the NDIS Workforce Capability Framework. The ‘Capability Framework’ provides a guide for Industry to the minimum skills and knowledge requirement required (particularly for Disability Support Workers) if quality outcomes/services are to be met and provided.

Although the ‘Capability Framework’ won’t be mandated it is likely that it will be considered ‘best practice’ by Industry. At this point in time the capabilities within the framework do not clearly map to a qualification. It would be beneficial for Disability Service Providers in Tasmania, if funding was available, to skill/upskill our workforce in line with capabilities documented in the ‘Workforce Capability Framework’.

Areas of current and emerging workforce development needs include:

- Middle Management
- Leadership
- Allied Health Assistants/Assistance (physio, OT, Speech Pathology)
- Palliative approach and end of life care (specifically contextualised for people with a disability)
- Non-clinical Health Supports
- High Intensity Health supports