

National Disability Agreement Fact Sheet (FAHCSIA)

Continuing a strong commitment to people with disability

A new National Disability Agreement between the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments will improve and increase services for people with disability, their families and carers.

The agreement reflects a strong commitment from both levels of government to provide more opportunities for people with disability to participate in and enjoy Australia's economic and social life.

The new agreement is designed specifically to assist people with disability to live as independently as possible, by helping them to establish stable and sustainable living arrangements, increasing their choices, and improving their health and wellbeing. At the same time, the agreement focuses on supporting families and carers in their caring roles.

Allocating record levels of Australian Government funding

Under the new agreement, the Australian Government will contribute \$5.3 billion to state and territory-run disability services over the next five years. The agreement means that by 2013, the Australian Government's contribution will reach \$1.25 billion, compared to \$620 million in 2007.

An extra \$408 million will fund services and reforms to the disability services system. As well, the agreement includes \$1.9 billion announced in May 2008 to pay for more than 24,000 supported accommodation, respite and in home care places.

Average indexation of Australian Government contributions will increase from 1.8 per cent a year to around 6 per cent—the highest level of indexation under a disability agreement.

Outside the agreement, the Australian Government will continue to provide \$9.88 billion for Disability Support Pension, over \$3.2 billion for Carer Payment and Carer Allowance, and more than \$600 million for services for people with disability, including employment services.

Setting a reform agenda

Importantly, the new agreement paves the way for significant reforms to the disability services system, with Disability Ministers agreeing in July this year to an ambitious National Disability Reform agenda. The reforms will mean a more responsive system of disability support that is easy to access and responds flexibly to people's changing needs.

The agenda will include reforms to roles and responsibilities for funding and delivery of disability services. This will lead to more consistent and responsive services, clarify accountabilities between governments, and improve disability services' performance.

As part of the reform process, governments will work in the first half of 2009 on proposals in community care relating to mental health, disability and aged care services. The goals of such reforms will be to deliver more integrated and responsive services for individuals and families, to clarify accountabilities between governments and to improve performance of service systems. Specific proposals in relation to community mental health, disability services and aged care will be considered in the first half of 2009 as part of this program, including future arrangements under the Home and Community Care Program.

In any new proposal, the Australian Government will continue to lead and coordinate national disability policy, deliver income support and employment services for people with disability, and work cooperatively with State and Territory Governments.

Improving the disability services system

The reforms aim is to create an effective, efficient and equitable disability services system, which focuses on early intervention, individual and personalised attention, and lifelong planning.

In agreeing to reform, governments will work together to introduce a system of single access points, uniform assessment processes, a national quality assurance system, more consistent access to disability aids and equipment, and better ways to measure unmet demand for disability services.

Elements that underpin the reforms are:

- systems that provide single access points and assessment processes in line with nationally-agreed principles to ensure people are referred to the most appropriate disability services;
- early intervention and planning to ensure that clients receive the most appropriate and timely support;
- improved measurement of unmet demand for disability services;
- population benchmarking of disability services;
- a national workforce strategy to address attraction and retention of the disability services workforce;
- a national quality assurance system for disability services; and
- national 'harmonisation' in providing aids and equipment.

Starting the new agreement

The agreement comes into effect from 1 January 2009 and will replace the existing Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement.

Finding out more

For more information about the National Disability Agreement and the National Disability Reform agenda:

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