



Queensland Advocacy Incorporated

Our mission is to promote, protect and defend, through advocacy, the fundamental needs and rights and lives of the most vulnerable people with disability in Queensland.

Systems and Individual Advocacy for vulnerable People with Disability

27th March, 2020

Mr. Martin Hoffman NDIA CEO martin.hoffman@ndis.gov.au

Hon Anne Ruston, Minister for Families and Social Services senator.ruston@aph.gov.au

Hon Stuart Robert, Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme
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Hon Michelle Landry Assistant Minister Children and Families Michelle.Landry.MP@aph.gov.au

Hon Luke Howarth, Luke.Howarth.MP@aph.gov.au

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Dear Eminent and Very Important People,

I am following up on my letter of the 4th March, 2020. I understand that like most of us working with and for vulnerable people with disability that during these uncertain and worrying times that emails are often overlooked, in the hectic overload that is occurring.

However, I am writing to ask that you undertake with extreme urgency the declaration of supports and services to all people with disability as "Essential Services".

We have already seen public announcements by some providers that non-essential supports would be withdrawn even including in-home supports. While we recognise that group activities in community must be ceased it is critical that people receive supports for personal care, cooking eating, house and yard maintenance.

We hold grave concerns that an increase of unauthorised and unlawful uses of restrictive practices will be utilised to 'isolate' vulnerable people who live in shared care arrangements.

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QAI endorses the objectives, and promotes the principles, of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Patron: His Excellency The Honorable Paul de Jersey AC

We seek to understand what safeguards will the Quality and Safeguards Commission establish to investigate and gain sharper oversight of how supports and services are delivered in congregate and shared care arrangements? May we expect to see a strengthening of reporting requirements and a higher level of scrutiny of these settings combined with robust investigations? We recommend that the Community visitor Program be extended and fortified to assist with this.

On behalf of people with disability and their families, advocates and allies, we request that the NDIA, and the Department of Social Services make a public declaration that Disability Supports and Services are essential services.

On behalf of QAI, our Management Committee which by constitution comprises a majority of people with disability as our foundation and guide, we seek your assurances and request that a public announcement from National Disability Services that no supports or services will be withdrawn but will be delivered differently (ie: individually). It is imperative that already vulnerable people with disability are not further marginalised and isolated. The term 'social distancing' should be replaced with 'spatial distancing' as social isolation is one of the extreme factors that already burden and inhibit the lives and mental well-being of people with disability.

It is critical that supports and services be creative about ways to engage people socially with community without close physical presence. To reiterate, 'social distancing', 'self-isolation' are trigger words that will imply shutting people in rooms, in houses, and away...away from perceived risk of infection, but more likely away from scrutiny, away from the things that bring people joy, away from life – and potentially place them in more danger or harm.

I look forward to your responses either directly or publicly.

Yours sincerely,



Michelle O'Flynn

Director

