

Psychiatric disability, transparency and the CSTDA

New South Wales is currently within its third five-year disability services agreement – the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA) for the period 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2007. This agreement forms the basis for the provision and funding of specialist services for people with a disability who require ongoing or long-term episodic support.

ACROD is currently developing a position paper to help inform negotiations towards a fourth CSTDA with input from other National Committees. While the current Agreement promotes excellent policy principles, it falls short on effectiveness. MHCC supports ACROD's view that there is a strong case for reforming the Agreement to ensure that it more effectively provides:

- resources to meet the need for disability services;
- better pathways and linkages between service systems administered by different jurisdictions;
- an improved interface between Disability and other programs such as Aged Care, Health, Education and Transport;
- publicly-available data that enable meaningful performance comparisons across jurisdictions, service planning and transparency in governmental expenditure; and
- a more consistent approach to quality.

The real importance of this agreement for people with disability as a result of mental illness lies in the transparency of the allocation of dollars from the Commonwealth and State and who is specifically responsible for the provision of psychiatric disability. In Victoria there is a very clear stream for mental health funding but in NSW it seems to fall through the gaps between NSW Health and the Department of Ageing Disability and Homecare (DADHC) with no-one taking responsibility. It is generally agreed that significant challenges are inevitable for as long as responsibility for disability services are split between different departments within the government bureaucracy. No doubt these and other issues will be discussed at the upcoming COAG meeting at which the Prime Minister will meet with state Premiers on the 10th February.

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