

Unanimous Support for Disability Agreement

Summer 2007: View from the Peak

The Senate Community Affairs Committee tabled its unanimous report into the funding and operations of the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement in early February 2007. The Senate Inquiry heard evidence from consumers, their carers and the disability service sector. Data received by the bipartisan committee highlighted a huge needs shortfall in service delivery throughout Australia. The report details examples of inadequacies in the funding system that left a man bedridden because he didn't have access to an electronic wheelchair. In another instance the parliamentary committee heard that a 35 year old intellectually disabled man has been on a waiting list for seven years for supported accommodation. Committee member and former health minister, Kay Paterson, indicated the committee was 'nothing short of embarrassed at the lack of services and the fragmentation of those services' at the launch of the report on 8 February.

The report calls for real changes to be implemented by Commonwealth and State governments if the CSTDA is to deliver real benefits to people with disabilities.

Key recommendations of the report included:

- More funds to be allocated if the CSTDA is to meet the real needs of people with disabilities.
- Develop Avenue national disability strategy
- Improve the availability of equipment such as wheelchairs
- Key areas in need of attention: whole of life planning; specialised assessment teams; indexation; portability and advocacy
- Greater consideration of individual control of funds where appropriate.