Nulsen continue to support the best interests of people with complex disabilities

The WA Labor Government is considering the transition of all services within Western Australia to the National Disability Insurance Agency. This is contrary to the Bilateral Agreement signed with the previous government in January this year. As you will be aware the Board of Nulsen Disability Services generally supports the terms of the Bilateral Agreement.

The issue is being reconsidered mainly on political and financial factors with the main benefits for the WA Labor Government being proposed as:

- The decision will be supported by both the Commonwealth Coalition Government and the national Labor opposition.
- Access to national NDIA budget allocation will repair a small part of the current budgetary issues faced the state Labor Government.
- It reduces any future risk of a cost overrun due to excessive numbers of people with disability coming into the scheme.
- There are concerns over the cost of the State Information Technology (IT) solution.

As you read on, I will attempt to address the major challenges of the future.

The national legislation is incorporated in the NDIS Act 2013: that is consistent with the WA Disability Services Act 1993. Australia now has nationally consistent eligibility and access criteria (Sections 22-24 of the NDIS Act). This will assist to facilitate the interstate transfer arrangements for people with disabilities across the nation.

The Scheme will encourage individual person centred plans with the possibility of an annual review, though this schedule may be modified in the future.

There will be an overall increase in funds to provide services for participants, estimated in WA as a total of $1.7 billion for 39,100 people. The Western Australian contribution of funds will be spent on participants within WA, the legislative provision is contained in Section 179 of the NDIA Act. The NDIA will monitor and assess quality outcomes from 1 July 2020 and will establish a number of additional safeguarding processes over this time. The current quality assurance processes will be managed by the state government until this time.

The supply of an adequate workforce will continue to challenge the implementation of the scheme in WA, where the estimated workforce is expected to increase from the current 12,000 to over 20,000 FTE. This trend will be exacerbated by the aging of the general population and the pressure for additional staff emanating from the aged care and child care sectors. It is expected that the use of casual staff will increase significantly.

The demand for services is expected to exceed supply in rural and remote settings throughout Australia, including WA.

There are high unfunded administration and transaction costs in the national scheme. The current national IT and Portal system are not fit for purpose and expensive to upgrade and maintain. This will impact cash-flow issues for many service providers, especially liquidity and working capital and eventually sustainability.

The specific challenges for Nulsen Disability Services will include many of the above issues. There will be required modifications to the financial transaction process, including funding that may be provided in arrears. We will need to readjust our internal policies and procedures to comply with the national legislative, policy, information, quality and funding frameworks.

Whatever the State Labor Government's final decision, I remain confident that our Board members, senior management and staff have the qualifications, skills and experience to rise to the challenges of the years ahead. We will endeavour to keep you fully informed so that you can continue to advocate on behalf of your family member.

Rest assured we will continue to support the best interests of people with complex disabilities, staying true to our values, our principles and especially our most important stakeholders; residents of Nulsen and your families.