



NSW Disability Advocacy Alliance

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Disability commissioner says secure long-term funding for advocacy in NSW must happen

Disability advocacy organisations have urged the NSW Government to act on the Ageing and Disability Commissioner's recommendation and guarantee long term funding for disability advocacy beyond 2020.

In his report into disability advocacy funding released today, Commissioner Robert Fitzgerald recommended that current funding for the advocacy groups be extended to 2022/23 with increased ongoing long-term funding into the future.

Funding is due to run out in June next year. Despite the Commissioner's recommendation, the disability minister Gareth Ward, this afternoon announced he will only commit to funding a further six months to the end of 2020.

NSW Disability Advocacy Alliance spokesperson and Physical Disability Council CEO. Serena Ovens, said she was pleased the Commissioner has recognised the commitment and importance of advocacy organisations for people with disability in NSW.

"We want to acknowledge that all parties have participated in good faith with the review despite the short timeframe and that this must only be the first step in the review process.

"The Government must provide people with disability in NSW with certainty by immediately confirming two years transitional funding and guaranteeing that government is committed to fully fund disability advocacy in the long-term."

Ms Ovens said the ongoing Royal Commission into violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability and ongoing failures within the NDIS highlighted the desperate need for disability advocacy to continue.

"For two years there has been ducking, weaving and passing the buck about how disability advocacy is funded in NSW - while local disability organisations survive on rolling temporary contracts and can't plan for the future.

"People with disability rely on vital advocacy supports to access services and solve major problems, which allows them to get on with their lives. Unnecessary anxiety about the future of advocacy supports only makes things harder.

"The message from people with disability in communities across NSW to our politicians is that this should never be about politics, it is about protecting and upholding the rights of over 1.4 million people with disability in NSW."

The Commissioner also reiterated that the NDIS will not fund advocacy of any kind, nor can an individual participant's funded package.

Ms Ovens said disability advocacy organisations are a lifeline for people with disability, both in the cities and in many of our regional areas where services are already scarce.

“I am concerned that Minister Ward has responded to this report by promising just six months extra funding, given how emphatic the Commissioner is about the need for ongoing and increasing funding and the complex task that will be involved in considering and implementing the actions of the report.

“Disability advocacy organisations want to work collegiately with the Minister to act on the report, secure the increase in funding that the commissioner has recommended, and to collaborate in rolling out a strengthened disability advocacy sector.”

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The Stand by Me campaign is run by a coalition of 22 disability advocacy, information and representation organisations in NSW. For more information go to www.standbyme.org.au