

**POSITION STATEMENT ON THE FINAL REPORT OF THE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S INQUIRY INTO THE
PROGRAM OF APPLIANCES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE (PADP)**

**The PADP Community Alliance warmly welcomes
the Final Report of the NSW Legislative Council's
Inquiry into the Program of Appliances for Disabled
People (PADP)**

Following the release of the Final Report, the PADP Community Alliance (the Alliance) was formed in order to provide a forum for organisations with an interest in the program to discuss the inquiry's recommendations, and to consider undertaking coordinated activity related to the implementation of these recommendations.

The Alliance believes that the Final Report provides an accurate assessment of PADP, and reflects the experience and evidence provided by Alliance members to the Inquiry.

General Comments

There is evidence that government spending now on PADP to meet the demand and need of people with a disability will deliver savings in the longer term, providing financial as well as a moral imperative for the program to operate more effectively. The Alliance believes that there is a strong case for changes across the current policy, financial and structural frameworks of PADP.

Alliance members have expressed in-principle support for the recommendations made in the Final Report.

The Alliance believes there is a need for increased accountability and transparency in any action taken to implement changes to the PADP, and seeks a clear framework for public reporting by Government and EnableNSW of any changes made to PADP resulting from the Government's response to the report.

PADP COMMUNITY ALLIANCE MEMBERS:



The Alliance also stresses that the importance of feedback from PADP clients can not be underestimated. Accordingly, a robust mechanism is essential to provide clients with the opportunity to express concern, and provide compliments, about the services they receive. A formal and clear complaints and appeals process that allows contribution from all community members will present valuable information on perceptions of the program.

The Alliance is concerned that the current name Program of Appliances to Disabled People (PADP) fails to resonate with all members of the community. This issue was raised in submissions to the Inquiry, however, was not emphasised in the final Report. The title of the program should reflect exactly the nature of the program. This ensures that all stakeholders, particularly clients and potential clients, understand the nature of the service. In addition to this the term 'Disabled Person' is archaic and should be updated to 'Person with Disability'.

Whilst all recommendations contained in the Final Report were considered important, the Alliance has identified the following seven recommendations as representing priority issues, and requiring strong shared advocacy and support. Consequently, we have provided the following detailed response to these recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Increase in base funding

The Alliance supports the need for an increase in the base recurrent funding of PADP. Whilst an additional \$11m recurrent is a good start, we encourage that this be considered as the first phase of an increase in base funding, which should continue to be expanded in line with anticipated increases in demand and changes in eligibility criteria.

The Alliance notes that the additional \$11m allocated to PADP in July 2008 was allocated to reduce the waiting list, and was not a figure identified as being adequate to meet current or increasing demand on the program.

Whilst we would welcome a more detailed and rigorous discussion on an ongoing process for determining adequate funding for PADP, based on data provided by PricewaterhouseCoopers calculations by Alliance members indicate that PADP may require an additional \$24.4m in base recurrent funding from 2009/10, rising to a total budget of \$100m in 2014/15¹. This recommendation is based on the rationale that there is no income eligibility restriction; there are no client co-payments and that this amount includes capacity for incremental budget increases to assist in meeting any increased program demand.

Recommendation 2: PADP as an entitlement program

The Alliance strongly supports recommendations that access to PADP is provided on an entitlement basis, and not an eligibility basis. We recognise that moving from eligibility to entitlement program should be undertaken within the context of fiscal responsibility, and indicate our willingness to cooperate in financial modeling.

We note reference made to the Federal Government's involvement in financial modeling, and accept the value and relevance of their contribution. However, we do not believe that financial modeling, nor debates about financial responsibility for funding PADP, should delay the implementation of needed reforms and additional NSW Government investment in PADP, but rather should be undertaken concurrently.

¹ Based on figures calculated by PricewaterhouseCoopers, Review of the program of appliances for disabled people, June 2006
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In order to adhere to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the "on loan status" of PADP equipment within NSW needs to be re-evaluated. Lack of client ownership over the equipment received can create barriers to people with disability fully exercising their right to have equipment that is essential for their ongoing health and wellbeing, independence, mobility and in some cases, survival. The long-term nature of disability often necessitates long term usage of equipment and/or customised equipment. It makes no sense to return very old or customised equipment which cannot be used by anyone else.

Ownership of equipment would reduce costs in the re-production of customised equipment as well as barriers to mobility and independence with groups:

- Individuals in contact with the Justice system; A person with disability leaving gaol is required to leave equipment in Criminal Justice PADP system and make new application for equipment in community.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; Aboriginal cultural borders do not match state and territory borders. As an example Bundjalung country covers northern NSW and southern QLD. The loan of PADP equipment is currently restricted to within NSW borders.
- Permanent interstate relocation; People with long-term disability who have customised equipment should not have to leave their equipment behind, or return it, and apply for new equipment when they relocate. Customised equipment is often of no use to anyone other than the person it was specifically assessed and prescribed for.
- Communities on the state or territory border where there is high cross border movement. There should be a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between adjacent states for reciprocal PADP to be available across borders.

Recommendation 3: Performance indicators

The Alliance strongly supports this recommendation on the basis that it is critical to ensuring transparency and ongoing monitoring of outcomes of PADP. Whilst waiting lists are a pivotal performance indicator for PADP, public reporting should encompass other agreed performance measures as well as progress on activities associated with reforming PADP. There needs to be an emphasis on providing adequate access and support to clients so that they can provide feedback on the services they receive. Avenues for feedback from PADP clients should be structured to allow for wide range of diversity in ability of this client group.

Recommendation 8: Abolish the co-payment

The Alliance strongly supports this recommendation on the basis that PADP client co-payments further exacerbate health service inequities experienced by people with disability. The Alliance considers that the abolition of PADP client co-payments, particularly given the inequitable and inconsistent collection of the co-payment between PADP lodgment centres and between applicants (often depending on the date of their application), is a priority recommendation.

Recommendation 17: Data on current, unmet and future demand

The Alliance supports this recommendation as a means of enhancing planning and quality assurance (performance) processes associated with PADP. The current deficiencies in the collection, quality and consistency of data collected in relation to PADP (and the concealed nature of this data) impede the ability of the Government and NSW Health to meet its obligations in ensuring PADP operates efficiently.

In line with Recommendation 3 (performance indicators) this information should be centrally collated and released publicly at appropriate intervals.

The Alliance believes that any delay in the design and implementation of data collection and collation systems should not be considered an adequate explanation for inaction on implementing responses to other Final Report recommendations.

Recommendation 20: Access for people from culturally different backgrounds

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

The report identified significant evidence of disadvantage to the access of PADP amongst the Aboriginal community. However, no specific recommendations are made in the report addressing these disadvantages for the Aboriginal community.

The Alliance strongly recommends a number of strategies, which should be reflected in the recommendation list, to make PADP more appropriate, accessible and accountable to Aboriginal communities;

- Concerted outreach strategies that engage with Aboriginal people across the state.
- Increase in awareness of PADP amongst Aboriginal communities. This education needs to move beyond pamphlets and posters and involve methods appropriate for the client group such as 'sitting down and having a yarn'.
- Services and supports that target the specific requirements of the Aboriginal community such as equipment that is specific for rural communities eg all-terrain wheelchairs.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities

The Alliance acknowledges and supports the Council's recommendation to make PADP information more accessible to people from culturally diverse backgrounds. However, the Alliance strongly recommends a deliberate and specific strategy for this community group comprising written, audio and other material that is targeted to community language and cultural groups.

Mechanisms for feedback, compliments and complaints must be structured in a culturally appropriate manner to recognise the diverse cultures and languages present within the community.

Recommendation 21: Coordination and integration of NSW Health and DADHC

The relationship and cooperation between NSW Health and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) is essential to the functioning of PADP and the success of any reforms and the equitable provision of equipment to eligible clients.

The Alliance has identified a number of areas relating to departmental coordination that require immediate resolution, including:

- The need for a whole of government approach to providing integrated services to people with disability. Integration of services would allow a client to access a wide range of services in a coordinated way.

- The inequitable provision of equipment to people with disabilities. In DADHC group homes where residents are not eligible for PADP, there can be an immediate provision of equipment by DADHC that is assessed as necessary for the individual compared to other people with disability living in the community who must make an application to PADP and pay a co-payment.²
- The complicated coordination of the NSW Health PADP scheme with necessary home modifications (HACC program) where one cannot proceed without the other thereby involving two separate and non-integrated processes imposes an added burden on the client.

Conclusion

This document represents the consensus opinion of a range of community organisations and individuals with an interest in PADP. It outlines the agreed position of the members of the Alliance on recommendations made in the Final Report of the NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into the Program of Appliances for Disabled People (PADP), and provides the platform for coordinated advocacy by the Alliance in order to secure the implementation of these recommendations.

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ENDORSED BY:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) • Spinal Cord Injuries Australia • People with Disability Australia • Aboriginal Disability Network • Occupational Therapists Australia NSW • Cancer Council NSW • Northcott Disability Services • Carers NSW | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Disability Council of NSW • Vision Australia • NSW Aboriginal Community Care Gathering Committee. • Spastic Centre • Independent Rehabilitation Suppliers Association (IRSA) • Association for Children with Disability NSW |
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² PADP Client Co-payment

Only eligible people who initially applied for and received PADP equipment, aids and appliances from 2003-2004 are required to pay the PADP co-payment of \$100. This PADP policy was introduced by the NSW Government without consultation with the NSW Health PADP Advisory Committee.