

. PLEASE TELL US YOUR NAME AND ORGANISATION

Pauline Williams. Coordinator at Action for More Independence and Dignity in Accommodation (AMIDA). AMIDA is an independent advocacy organisation which advocates for good quality housing for people with disabilities which is accessible, affordable and non-institutional. We provide advocacy to individuals and advocate for change in systems which prevent people from achieving good housing. AMIDA strongly supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability and works to assert these rights and community inclusion for people with a disability. We prioritise people with an intellectual disability.

2. WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF ILC? *

It is important that the ILC acknowledges that, "a system that responds only to individual need is not enough to bring about societal change" and that, "Investment in community education, broad based interventions and capacity building sustains and strengthens informal support and promotes and social and economic inclusion of people with a disability". It is also important to acknowledge that independent advocacy organisations, Disabled Persons Organisations and self advocacy groups have been working in this space for decades. That we have an NDIS and that inclusion is a goal is due to the societal change this work has already produced. The most important element of the ILC is that it identifies the need for systemic change and will contribute to this. What is lacking is the recognition that it can't do this alone and needs to identify and build on the work of the community and work with the independent advocacy and self advocacy organisations who have the expertise the ILC will require.

3. WHAT IS MISSING FROM THE ILC POLICY FRAMEWORK? *

What is missing from the ILC is the acknowledgement of the importance of identifying the foundations upon which its work will be built. The societal change in the way people with disabilities are perceived, and increasingly included and supported didn't come from nothing. It has come from advocacy by a network of organisations that built up over time education resources, dialogue, debate and challenges to existing systems. Advocacy is acknowledged as one of the enablers but it has in fact been doing much of the work the ILC will engage in. Don't smash down what's already been built as starting again will not advantage people with a disability. Don't dismiss the value of organisations with decades of expertise in this space. If we haven't solved all the problems this is because our society discriminates against people with a disability and this cannot be wiped away quickly or without cooperation, collaboration and coordination with successful advocacy and self-advocacy organisations.

4. HOW WILL WE KNOW THE ILC STREAMS ARE MEETING THEIR OBJECTIVES/VISION? *

The objectives should be tied to progress in delivering on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability. The NDIS has been put forward by the Australian Government as its main activity in delivering on the Convention. It makes sense to have the attainment of these rights as a common set of benchmarks for all NDIS activities. Work done by the ILC which improves Australia's outcomes in meeting the Convention will be a measure of ILC success. Governments report on this progress already and the community produces a shadow report which should also be taken into account by the ILC as this often identifies shortcomings that governments are unwilling to admit or unable to identify.

5. WHAT WOULD BE THE IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES? *

A major challenge for ILC is not to underestimate the depth of the entrenched discrimination and exclusion that people with a disability face. People with an intellectual disability face even greater levels of discrimination. For example a person with an intellectual disability is twice as likely to have a crime committed against them and they are over represented in prison populations and the list of over representation on any measure of disadvantage goes on. It would be a mistake to reduce ILC supports early in the hope that these resources will only be needed until services become efficient. They should only be reduced when both the community and the government agree that the UN Convention obligations are being fully met.

6. WHICH ASPECTS OF A PERSON'S LIFE DO YOU THINK ILC COULD HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT ON? *

This will depend on the targeting of the resources. We believe it should be targeted at those who are most discriminated against, experiencing the worst forms of abuse and exclusion and have the least opportunity to act on this. This group is people with an intellectual or cognitive impairment who are residents in group or congregate living. These people are rarely given the opportunity to hear about their rights. Even support workers often don't know what these are. Governments and services providers resist and obstruct us providing this community education to these people. We have fought to gain this access but funding is not provided for our peer training yet every time we provide it people tell us stories of rights abuses against them. These peoples lives are invisible to the rest of the community. We believe information and capacity building must start first with those who stand to benefit the most and who have been most excluded from this knowledge. Without this knowledge of their rights the abuses continue to be invisible and nothing will change. Peer to peer education on rights and self advocacy support is vital to change the experience people have in their own homes which should be a haven and for many is very far from this.

7. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PRINCIPLES THAT SHOULD GUIDE INVESTMENT ACROSS ILC STREAMS? *

The principles are fine in broad terms but what principle will guide prioritisation of funding? There will be priorities and these should be transparent. We believe the principle guiding priorities must be to target those most excluded from information, linkages and capacity building. And further to target those most disadvantaged by society due to disability.

A further principle should be to avoid conflict of interest and build on the work, expertise, value and proven success of independent advocacy organisations, self advocacy groups and Disabled Persons Organisations whose conflict of interest is minimal.

8. HOW DO YOU SEE THE INTERFACE BETWEEN ILC FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES AND THE INTERACTION WITH THE MAINSTREAM SERVICE SYSTEM? (I.E. HOUSING, EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, HEALTH, FAMILY, ACCESSIBILITY AND TRANSPORT) *

The ILC could play a role in ensuring these mainstream services, particularly government services, are educated and responding appropriately to the obligations incumbent upon them by our ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with a disability. The articles when upheld will meet the goals of enhance inclusiveness, improved accessibility and best practice. If

the ILC funded advocacy and self-advocacy groups to provide training and information on inclusive practices and policies this would improve access, inclusion and best practice.

9. OTHER COMMENTS (OPTIONAL)

Imagine Australia today if there had been no advocacy over the last 30 years to challenge the way our society treated people with a disability. The cruel Dickensian institutions filled with miserable people cut off from and abused by society would still be with us. Families would still be torn apart by this policy. Until they were challenged it was a self-evident truth that they provided the "best practice support" to people with a disability and their families. That the NDIS and ILC is being discussed at all is a miracle to those whose living memory is of those horrific institutions. We have witnessed massive change from those dark times, to community group homes, and now to individual consumer driven support. But we didn't get here without enormous advocacy effort, community education and courage by people with a disability and their supporters. Advocacy Organisations and self-advocacy groups have been providing Information, Linkages and Capacity Building for years but the challenges have been enormous. However look what has been achieved. So build on this don't dismiss it, or discard it because the societal change required is still huge and independent advocacy and importantly self-advocacy is ready willing and able to work with the ILC to ramp up our effort and continue our success.

