



Update from the CE
Dr Garth Bennie

With another successful annual conference just behind us along with a Leadership Forum and the landing of budget 2019 all in the same week it has taken us some time to reflect on the impact of such a busy period.

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Budget 2019

We took a few days to carefully analyse the budget in relation to the disability sector and to check this analysis with Ministry officials before drawing firm conclusions. While the budget did deliver some significant increases across a number of areas the core funding regime for disability support services is in no better shape as we roll into a new financial year.

A summary of our analysis across both MoH and MSD can be found [HERE](#), but the main points are:

- The planned spending for DSS in the new financial year is, actually, \$7million less than what was actually spent in the previous financial year
- There is a \$13.7 million drop in the contingency funding available in the new financial year for DSS cost pressures.
- To avoid significant rationing of access to supports and services further cost pressure funding will have to be sourced at some point as the financial year unfolds

- DSS Contract price uplifts and the implementation of the residential pricing model (RPM) look to be remote possibilities at this stage (although there is currently some renewed work being done by the Ministry on updating the RPM).
- There were some marginal cost pressure and volume increases in MSD funding, but this will make little tangible impact in terms of access to community participation programmes and to address the chronic unemployment levels of disabled people.
- There will be continuing high levels of unmet need for disabled people and families – both for those in the current system and those stuck outside it.

Another way to think about how broken the disability service system actually is would be to consider the following scenario:

- The 12% gap between the actual cost of providing services and current funding that we have already identified will grow to a 15% gap over the next year
- There is a right now a 10% gap between the funding appropriated in the 2019 budget and the current demand for support and services (never mind that levels of unmet need will undoubtedly grow during the coming year)
- The EGL demonstrations in Christchurch and the Waikato and now the prototype in Mid-central have consistently experienced the emergence of another 25% of previously unidentified individuals and families on top of those already in the system. This means the strong likelihood that approximately 25% of disabled people and their families and whānau in New Zealand are not accessing support and services that they are actually entitled to! This is a national disgrace!
- Collectively the above 3 points mean that disability funding is probably only half what it actually needs to be!
- It is also likely that this additional group of 25% are disproportionately Maori, Pacific Peoples, those from rural areas and people who are impacted by poverty.

Over the last 8 months (since the release of the report we commissioned from Deloitte) NZDSN and its membership have collectively highlighted disability funding issues with large numbers of politicians, regularly met with key Ministers and managed some fairly regular media attention. While the budget did deliver a boost in funding it fell way short of what was needed.

NZDSN will be taking some time over the next few weeks to reflect on what we have been doing, the impact we have/have not had and, from a strategy point of view, where we need to go from here. This will culminate in a focus at our Leadership Forum on 24 September, being held in Wellington, on identifying some key priorities as we move towards the budget 2020 process and the general election next year.

A separate communication on the Leadership Forum, being held in conjunction with our AGM, will be sent out shortly.

Conference 2019 and Beyond

Many thanks to all of those who completed our conference feedback survey. The overall feedback was really positive, and we have had a lot of unsolicited feedback from many people who really enjoyed the event. However, we have picked up some comments and also from our own reflections we do feel that after a decade of annual conferences the current format may have “peaked”. For 2020 we are looking at an alternative format involving a series of smaller events (or “symposiums”) in different locations.

Each event will have a single topic focus. We also hope that this approach will reach out more to the regions and provide for better access and wider audiences. We hope to have details available by the end of July so that people can look at what will be available, when and where – and plan accordingly. And just to assure National Conference fans, we have not abandoned the idea of these, just their frequency.

Gathering Data on Budget Impacts

While Ministers and the Ministry of Health have been clear that there will be no cuts, our budget analysis indicates that cost pressures will remain a significant issue for the Ministry. We are therefore keen to identify over the next year any rationing activity as part of “business as usual” that could be interpreted as unreasonable and unnecessary – causing negative impacts for disabled people, families and providers. This could be in the form of delays in access to services/supports, not increasing support in line with demonstrably increased need, or unjustifiable decreases in support packages.

To do this we will be sending out a table for providers to complete to track any such instances. This can be returned to us on a monthly basis so that we can systematically gather any evidence of overzealous rationing. The data will be anonymous so that individuals and providers cannot be identified.

NZDSN Membership Survey

In the next week we will be sending out a membership survey to collect feedback on the performance of NZDSN across the full range of our work programme and associated activities. This will include canvassing your ideas on topics for events and your thinking about our strategy in relation to funding and pricing issues.

Provider/Workforce Development

Through funding from MSD, we will be in a position to offer workforce development opportunities in the areas of Community Participation, support for people with Very High

Needs and Transition from School. We also have some resource to advance the development and delivery of a level 5 Diploma Qualification in Employment Support. We are scoping out a work programme at the moment and we are very eager to hear from people who may be able to contribute information and training on cutting edge developments and innovation in these areas. EGL Principles will be used as a reference point for identifying innovations.

Leadership Exchange Programme

In March our first Leadership Exchange Programme was hosted by Tautoko Services and Options in Palmerston North. The feedback has been very positive from those who participated. A detailed host report can be found [HERE](#).

We will be calling soon for further Expressions of Interest to host exchanges. If you think your organisation or group is successfully leading innovative practice that reflects the implementation of EGL principles, then we want to hear from you! The Expression of Interest request will include all the information you need to consider being a host.

NZDSN Māori Cultural Advisory Committee

I would just like to acknowledge the significant contribution that members of our Māori Cultural Advisory Committee are making to assist NZDSN and the leadership being provided by Tania Thomas as Chair and Graham Warren as our NZDSN Kaumatua.

A huge thank you for your contributions! The group is currently working on a range of resources and guidance which we will be making available through the website.

Key Dates

- AGM and Leadership Forum – 24 September (Wellington)
- Dunedin Providers Network meeting – 6 August
- Nelson providers Network Meeting – 14 August
- Waikato providers Meeting – 22 August (Tauranga)
- Lower North providers meeting – 27 August (Paraparaumu)
- Auckland providers Network meeting – 4 September
- Hawkes Bay providers meeting – 4 October (Hastings)
- Canterbury providers Meeting – 16 October (Christchurch)



Sara Georgeson
Policy Analyst

Submissions

From March to May saw a number of reviews undertaken by government agencies. We made submissions to the following:

- Employer-assisted work visas (we had a follow up meeting with MBIE officials)
- The proposed Wage Supplement to replace the Minimum Wage Exemption
- Reform of Vocational Education

Many thanks to those of you who worked with us in preparing our submissions. In addition, while we did not make a submission we did indicate to Worksafe NZ that their draft “Violence in the Healthcare Industry: Guidance for PCBUs” needs considerably more work for it to be useful to the disability sector as in its current form it is almost entirely hospital-focused (we await their response).

If you want further information on any of our submissions contact Sara Georgeson at saraq@nzdsn.org.nz



NZDSN Auckland Regional News
Mireille Vreeberg

Auckland Regional News Update

Click [here](#) for the latest updates from our Auckland Regional Team!