

Individualised Funding in Disability Services

Empowering people with disability
to create better lives



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1 **INTRODUCTION**


Labor has its roots in socialism - its default position is that the collective knows better than the individual. They are the party of large unions and large government.

In disability services, this means Labor would rather have government bureaucrats make the crucial decisions about the services people receive. Labor's centralised, 'one size fits all' approach is leaving people with a disability disengaged, disempowered and disappointed.

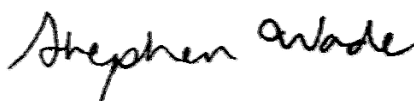
The Liberal Party believes that people with disability and those who support them understand their support needs better than politicians or bureaucrats. Individuals know their own circumstances best - they know their values, they know the risks they are willing to take and, in the end, they have the right to make their own choices about their own lives.

We believe it is time for government to put the people who use the support in control of their lives, to empower them to imagine and create better futures. To this end, a Liberal Government will introduce individualised funding for South Australians with disability needing support - funding which objectively assesses the support needs of people with disability and enables them to effectively deploy individualised funding to pursue their life goals.

Individualised Funding will not resolve all the challenges facing disability support services in South Australia. However, we believe this policy – our first policy in disability for 2010 – is a clear commitment that people with disability will be central to a Liberal Government approach.



Martin Hamilton-Smith
Leader of the Opposition



Stephen Wade
Shadow Minister for Disability

2 LABOR IS FAILING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

Under the Rann Labor Government, services and support for people with disability have deteriorated, placing more and more stress on individuals and their families.

With thousands of people languishing on waiting lists, a faltering bureaucracy and a disengaged Government, Labor is failing to support people with disability to improve their lives.

The Government has consistently built the bureaucracy and centralised decision making taking power away from people with disability, those most affected by the decisions:

- funding of \$750,000 was cut from non-government organisations as information services were centralised in the Department.
- the specialist Independent Living Equipment Program has been abolished and consumers now have less choice in terms of equipment and their service provider.
- the Government abolished Julia Farr Services, the Intellectual Disability Services Council and the Independent Living Centre replacing community-based boards with centralised bureaucratic control.
- in the last financial year, the Department employed 200 more staff (FTE) than budgeted and the bureaucracy ballooned to a record 4,256 FTEs¹.

Three years after Labor's restructure, the disability sector is still waiting for any vision for disability services in South Australia.

At the same time that the threat of defunding has silenced the disability sector, the Government persists in denying the reality of the problems faced.

¹ State Budget Papers 2008-09

3 INDIVIDUALISED FUNDING – A SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MODEL

People with disability are entitled to a level and mode of support that enables them to maintain a decent life and assists them to pursue their life goals.

People with disability, like other South Australians, want control over their own lives. Individualised funding models are ways of funding disability support which put the person with a disability in control through:

- basing a person's funding on an objective assessment of a person's support needs;
- assisting people with disability to imagine and plan a better future; and
- providing consumers of services with choice and control as to the services they receive.

By allowing people to choose what services and supports best suit their individual needs, Individualised Funding empowers people with a disability to shape their own future and to participate in and enrich their communities.

By giving consumers the flexibility and independence to spend their money as they see fit, [Individualised funding] encourages the evolution of long term care services that are responsible to consumer needs rather than to government regulations"

- Florida Policy Exchange Centre

Individualised Funding in disability services has evolved over three decades in countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States.

A Liberal Government will:

- draw on world's best practice to develop and introduce a uniquely South Australian model of individualised funding for services for people with a disability.
- develop an implementation strategy that fosters a market for services, including transitional support to established service providers to evolve their services.

4 INDIVIDUALISED FUNDING AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

“[Parties to the Convention recognise] the importance for persons with disabilities of their individual autonomy and independence, including the freedom to make their own choices”

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Individualised Funding offers people with disability the opportunity to take control of the supports available to them to enhance their quality of life.

Under Individualised Funding, the support needed by a person with a disability is assessed through an objective needs assessment.

Each person develops and implements a personal support plan within the assessed need and allocated resources. If they choose, they can engage government, a non-government agency or a trusted individual to assist them.

The personal support plan is the expression of the choices and control of the person with a disability. A review of the plan by a government officer would be limited to verifying that the plan is focussed on meeting the needs identified and does not involve prohibited activities (e.g. illegal activities or gambling). This oversight, together with the control by the person with disability, has shown to be effective in protecting clients from exploitation.

Individualised Funding enables people with disability to avoid having a reactive, crisis-driven government bureaucracy run their lives. They can move on to the front-foot to plan their own lives - for now and for the future.

A Liberal Government will:

- aim to have all clients who wish to access Individualised Funding able to do so by 2014.
- establish a consumer panel of people with a disability and their carers to advise on the implementation of Individualised Funding.
- develop and implement a quality assurance program with elements such as independent advocacy and information, a community visitor's scheme and a restrictive practices regime.

5 INDIVIDUALISED FUNDING AND THE GOVERNMENT

Individualised Funding means that the government, and ultimately the taxpayer, gets better value for money – resources are better targeted to those who need them and more efficiently deployed to meet needs.

Individualised Funding will require Disability SA to be more efficient, transparent and people focussed. As more individuals take up Individualised Funding, government will redirect its role from bureaucratic case management to front-foot planning support and services.

At the non-government organisation level, the government will act as a market regulator focussing on quality assurance for people with disability through safeguards and transparent complaints mechanisms.

Government will continue to provide services in response to clients, to manage complex supports and even to foster new services to meet demand.

Risk of poor management of the resources is addressed through the oversight of plans, and payment and audit controls.

Experience across the world shows that the cost of support does not tend to increase under Individualised Funding, and may even fall, as people with disability assume responsibility for making their own decisions. More tailored and targeted support means that fewer resources are likely to be needed to achieve better outcomes.

“...all the available evidence suggests that [Individualised funding] leads to greater user satisfaction, to greater continuity of care, to fewer unmet needs, and to a more cost-effective use of scarce public resources”

- Simon Duffy, In-Control UK

Liberal Government will:

- refocus Disability SA on providing needs assessment, support for planning and guidance through the process, rather than focus on case managers rationing limited services.

6 INDIVIDUALISED FUNDING & THE NON-GOVERNMENT SECTOR

The story of the community sector is one of the community responding to its needs and, over time, government providing funding as the need and costs grow beyond the capacity of community groups.

Individualised Funding gives non-government organisations (NGOs) the opportunity and the flexibility to again focus on responding to client need rather than to the dictates of political or bureaucratic fashion.

“[Individualised Funding] arrangements provide incentives that encourage service agencies to be more responsive”

- Robbi Williams, Julia Farr Association

The introduction of Individualised Funding will be managed so that NGOs are given support and appropriate timeframes, at least 2 years, to respond to any changes in demand.

The Government will work with State disability-funded NGOs to develop organisation-specific strategies to assist them to adjust to Individualised Funding. Support could include technical advice and funding to support core sustainability, including service reliability, safeguards, accountability and communications with stakeholders.

As the South Australian model is developed some services, such as crisis response and some specialist services, may continue to be directly government-funded.

A Liberal Government will work with the non-government sector to maintain a skilled workforce and disability standards.

A Liberal Government will:

- establish an implementation team, involving Government and non-government officers, key proponents of Individualised Funding, consumers and carers to work with Government to finalise the model so that implementation can commence by January 2011.

7 INDIVIDUALISED FUNDING AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES

The Liberal Party believes that society is strengthened and enriched when each and every person contributes their experiences, skills and aspirations. A community which is inclusive and supportive of people with a disability is a richer and more vibrant community. Likewise, people with a disability have a responsibility to contribute to their communities.

“[Societies] tend to disregard the potential for contribution by the person living with disability...the person is placed in a passive role of care recipient and unable to enjoy the freedom and responsibility that goes with participation and reciprocation”.

- Robbi Williams, Julia Farr Association

We need to build the capacity of individuals, families and the community as a whole to be inclusive – to support people to be good neighbours through nurturing natural connections within community.

Individualised Funding supports community inclusion by providing resources to assist people with disability to flexibly and creatively facilitate their own community engagement.

By being inclusive, the community will informally provide much of the support that many people with disabilities need.

Accordingly, not all the resources deployed to support a person need be paid support or government funded. The aspirations of people with a disability are as diverse as those of other South Australians. Often the resources which facilitate those aspirations are not available within government or even available to purchase.

A Liberal Government will:

- support initiatives, within government and the community, to facilitate an inclusive community for people with disability and other South Australians.