Dear Ms Bush,

We wish to comment on ways to enhance the participation of people living with disabilities who are also ageing. People ageing with disabilities contribute to Victorian society. Like their non-disabled peers, people ageing with disabilities have important social roles to fulfill, including ongoing responsibilities to care for families, ageing relatives, friends and communities. Many are engaged also in voluntary work in various forms of advocacy.
**About the Physical Disability Council of Victoria**
The vision of the Physical Disability Council of Victoria (PDCV) is to ensure that the needs of all people with physical disabilities are enshrined in Victorian Government legislation, policies, services and programs in all of the private sector and Victorian community enabling equal participation. PDCV is the peak Victorian body representing those with a physical disability in Victoria. Its State wide membership includes metropolitan and country members. Regular general meetings take place in Melbourne and rural Victoria to consult with members and to build our membership base. Further information about PDCV can be found on our website at http://home.vicnet.net.au/~pdcv/

**Definition of disability**
We use the word ‘disability’ in the same sense as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which came into effect May 3rd 2008. The CRPD recognises that disability is an evolving concept and results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society. Disability affects 18.5% of citizens and its incidence increases with age as can be seen in the following diagram.

*Disability by age and sex (ABS, 2010. p.5)*

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The challenge of ageing while living with long-term disability.

A new and growing cohort of the Australian ageing population are those who have lived for decades with long-term physical disabilities. For many years people with disabilities lived with little community or government support until after 1981, the International Year of Disabled Persons. We are ageing in unprecedented numbers (AIHW, 2000; ABS, 2010). The same phenomenon has been observed in the USA (Treischmann, 1992; Putnam, 2002) and the United Kingdom (Zarb, 1996). People with long-term disabilities often confront increases in their primary impairments as well as age related health conditions or lifestyle diseases.


People with disabilities want to continue to live in their communities and realise their recreational, family and social interests. While ageing can bring extra physical difficulties, we must be supported to age as positively as possible. People with disabilities have pride in what they achieved. Life as a person with disability does not end at an arbitrary age. Disability continues throughout ageing. Policy makers must remember the Guiding Principles of Equality, Dignity and Self-Determination, Diversity and Non-Discrimination which underpin the State Disability Plan and apply these principles when considering ageing of Victorians with disabilities.

**Major factors affecting community participation of Victorians ageing with long-term disabilities.**

The Physical Disability Council of Victoria is concerned about three factors which affect the current ageing of people with disabilities, the expense of aids and equipment, aged care service providers who discourage the use of motorised mobility aids, and the lack of experienced health professionals who can advise clients who must manage their disabilities as well as cope with ageing processes. While the Physical Disability Council of Victoria supports the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), we are also concerned about the potential of moving older people with disabilities arbitrarily into the aged care field.

1. **Aids and Equipment.** The majority of people with physical disabilities are not covered by insurance schemes for provision of aids and equipment such as power chairs.

   **Case study.**
   Maxine has paralysis of most of her body. While she was working she was able to buy her wheelchairs. Since retirement she has had to have some help from the State Wide Equipment Program. This year her customised power chair will cost about $14,000 but SWEP can only fund $8,000 of the price. Maxine has to provide the rest somehow.
A customer who is unable to pay the difference has to go without necessary mobility devices.

2. **Aged care service providers.**
The coincidence of increased disabilities and age acquired health conditions, are very difficult to manage without impairment specific medical and professional advice. There are very few health professionals who understand the dual fields of disability and ageing. There is one partially developed model, Polio Services Victoria, which is funded by the Department of Human Services Ageing Division Sub-Acute Ambulatory Care.

Apart from the difficulty of getting appropriate advice, people with disabilities experience aged care as unsympathetic.

**Case study.**
Barry’s arthritis caused him mobility impairment to the point where he couldn’t go outside his home. He retired from work, bought a power scooter and resumed his social life. He became frailer with age and was admitted into an aged care facility. He was not allowed to use the scooter at all in case he ran into another resident. Barry was a careful driver and was prepared to just use his scooter to go out. He was told he could not keep his scooter. Barry now uses a manual chair and is unable to venture into the local community. This type of restriction is elder abuse.

3. One issue with the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
The Physical Disability Council of Victoria is concerned about the intent and implementation of Recommendation 3.6 of the Productivity Commission’s Report.\(^7\) It indicates that at Age Pension age, a person with disability supported by NDIS, should be given

\(^7\) Disability Care and Support: Productivity Commission Inquiry Report. No. 34. 31/7/11
the choice of staying with NDIS service arrangements…or moving to the aged care system, where they would be governed by all of the support arrangements of that system.’

Disability does not disappear at Age Pension Age. There is no magical cure when one reaches a statutory age.

**Strategies to enable people ageing with long-term disabilities to participate.**

PDCV recommends the following measures to enhance and prolong participation in the community by people with disabilities.

1. Adequate funding of aids and equipment. People with disabilities need assistive aids to enjoy community life. We support the aims of the Aids and Equipment Alliance [www.aaea.org.au](http://www.aaea.org.au) which calls for increased government funding for equipment to enable community based living.

2. Development of service models for health promotion for people with disabilities together with management of ageing processes.

3. Careful attention to the implementation of the NDIS so that ageing people with disabilities can continue to participate in the community. PDCV states that people with disabilities are entitled to receive necessary support until the end of life.

The Physical Disability Council of Victoria is happy to discuss any part of this submission further.

Yours sincerely

*H. Hartfield*

(Harold Hartfield
President)