

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 6 June 2016 5:37 PM
To: FCDC
Cc: Greg Gardiner
Subject: RE: Inquiry into services for people with autism spectrum disorder

I am aware that submissions to this inquiry are closed. But there were some things said in the abuse inquiry which seemed to have missed a great deal of information and which are directly relevant to this inquiry.

A number of years ago, the Victorian Government established the Communication Access Network to coordinate both statewide and local programs to ensure that those with complex communication needs can access the assistance that they require. It is also not just about providing communication devices to people, but also making the whole community communication accessible. This has been led by SCOPE and their Communication Resource Centre. Organisations can apply and go through an accreditation process to become communication accessible. Like we expect places to be accessible to those with mobility impairments, we also need the world to be accessible to those with communication impairments. People should be able to communicate independently with everyone, not just a support worker. Very big companies, including Vline have paid to have ALL staff trained in communication accessibility and to have cards that all staff on trains and buses to carry with them to enhance communication. This service has been removed from the Barwon region 2 years ago as a result of the NDIS and will be slowly removed from the rest of the state as the NDIA rolls out. The funding is being transferred to the NDIA, although they are not doing any such thing.

Communication Resource Centre: <http://www.scopevic.org.au/service/communication-access/>

Most people are aware that the government funds wheelchairs and the like for those who need them, this is through the statewide equipment program. The state government also funds communication devices through 2 schemes, the

Electronic Communication Device Scheme which is coordinated by Yooralla <http://www.yooralla.com.au/services/Communication-and-Assistive-Technology/electronic-communication-devices-scheme>

And the Non Electronic Communication Aid Scheme coordinated by SCOPE, for adults from the age of 18: <http://www.scopevic.org.au/service/necas/>

As they are block funded, there are limits to what they will fund, especially the electronic one, which will not fund general items, like ipads, although they will fund the cost of the apps. They will also not fund more than \$7,000 in any 12 month period. Sometimes there can be short waiting periods, up to 3 months.

DHHS also blocks fund therapy services to both Scope and Yooralla, for anyone from 5. While they are not going to be providing weekly speech therapy appointments, due to the limited nature of their funding, they do communication assessments by speech therapists who are all very highly skilled in augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), given that 90% of their work is to assess and train people in the use of AAC. There are waiting lists, often from 6 – 12 weeks, but it is possible.

None of this means that all of those who need them are being referred to them, but they are possible, and I felt that to some degree it was being said by some people it was not possible.

The NDIA has improved access to very expensive communication devices, such as computers that pick up people's eye gaze, etc.