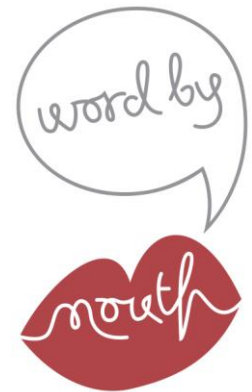




30th July 2023

NDIS Review Panel

Dear Professor Bruce Bonyhady AM, Ms Lisa Paul AO PSM and Review Panel,



RE: Submission to NDIS Review Panel
Access to NDIS Public Funding Provisions for Speech Pathology Management
by Children and Young Persons

As a clinician and dedicated researcher in the field of human communication sciences, I am pleased to provide the Review Panel with two recently published qualitative peer reviewed manuscripts. The first article explored the perceived facilitators and barriers of Australian speech pathologists for children and young persons accessing public funding models (i.e., NDIS) within private practice settings (Nickless et. al., 2023a). The second article (Nickless et. al., 2023b) conducted a re-analysis of the original dataset (Nickless et. al., 2023a), focusing on ethical considerations for speech pathologists (as funding stewards) in ministering public funding models for children and young persons accessing services through private practice.

As a pivotal public funding model, the NDIS continues to be revolutionary in delivering functional outcomes to individuals with communication and swallowing needs and assisting their families in accessing crucial and speech pathology services. This research is important as it provides salient information from the perspective of providers and the subsequent impact on participants, specifically:

1. Access to NDIS can be influenced by:
 - the capacity of family members to engage and understand funding models;
 - the education level and language use of parents;
 - the NDIS posturing as a “middle class system”; and
 - NDIA planners and LACs limited knowledge of speech pathology services.
2. With respect to efficiency and productivity, the NDIS funding process:
 - is time consuming and bureaucratic which can lead to delays in accessing funding;
 - is highly dependent on communication of funding information which may not come from an experienced health professional, rather a NDIA planner or LAC who has limited health or disability experience in communication and swallowing; and
 - requires significant administration by both families (i.e., limiting the time family members engage in employment) and speech pathologists (i.e., decreased productivity due to administration requirements in writing support letters, review & appeal reports, time spent liaising and trying to connect with NDIS representatives etc).
3. NDIS packages not reflecting the scientific evidence for best practice and scientifically rigorous speech pathology management, which can often be harmful and unethical;
4. Consequences of the NDIS include:
 - inconsistencies communicated by NDIS representatives;
 - complexities in navigating and understanding funding criteria; and
 - impact on the workforces including waitlists, occupation health and safety considerations, impact on quality of service and employee burnout.

It is hoped this submission supports your panel in effecting consequential reforms so that this leading public funding model can truly be revolutionary and attain the functional outcomes

for participants and their families. Should the opportunity arise, I welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission with you and may be contacted via email: [REDACTED]. I look forward to your final report.

Yours Sincerely,



Mr Tristan Nickless,
Principal Speech Pathologist
Chief Operating Officer
Words By Mouth Pty Ltd

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Department of Audiology & Speech Pathology

PhD (Cand), MSpPath, BA(Hons)/BBus(Mgmt) MSPAA, CPSP

References

Article 1

Nickless, T., Gold, L., Dowell, R., & Davidson, B. (2023a). Public purse, private service: The perceptions of public funding models of Australian independent speech-language pathologists. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, Volume 25, Issue 3*. 462-478. *Special Issue Speech Pathology Australia 2022 Conference*.

Article 2

Nickless, T., Gold, L., Dowell, R., & Davidson, B. (2023b). The million-dollar question: What are the ethical considerations of public funding provisions for Australian speech-language pathologists engaged in independent practice? *Journal of Clinical Practice in Speech-Language Pathology, Volume 25, Number 2, 52-59*. *Speech Issue Ethics: Essential for Everyday Practice*

Encl.