

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Friday, 5 April 2019

### **Balancing the State's books at the cost of vulnerable people**

The McGowan Government is under renewed pressure to provide ongoing funding to Western Australian disability service providers to fill the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) \$1.6 billion blackhole in the Federal Budget.

Nulsen Group CEO Gordon Trewern said that his organisation which provides care and services to people with complex disabilities in Western Australia and like-minded not-for-profits are needlessly haemorrhaging millions of dollars which could be better spent on people in their care.

“The State Government is trying to deliver on its promise to generate a budget surplus, but it appears that part of that is at the expense of the most vulnerable people in our community,” Mr Trewern said.

“In light of the Morrison Government’s recent Federal Budget there is an urgent need for the State Government to put in place an appropriately funded five-year transition strategy to make sure Western Australians with disabilities continue to receive high-quality care and services,” Mr Trewern said.

Recently, Disability Services Minister Stephen Dawson announced \$6.8 million in transition funding to 34 Western Australian disability service providers, including Nulsen Group in an effort to plug the NDIS’ funding gaps.

“While it might seem like a generous amount prior to the State Budget, it doesn’t make up for the funding that was taken away back in December 2017 when WA signed up to the nation-wide NDIS.

“The McGowan Government is acutely aware of the desperate need for adequate funding to support WA’s disability service sector which is already showing signs of stress during the transition to the NDIS.

“We estimate that the WA State Government has more than \$200 million in cash available to support people with disabilities,” he said.

Mr Trewern said that the transition to the individualised funding model of the NDIS away from State based funding has opened huge financial gaps which are placing WA disability service providers, including Nulsen Group, at needless risk.

“Prior to the NDIS, residential care providers were given vacancy funding to cover the costs associated with maintaining services to remaining residents and identifying a suitable candidate to fill the vacant room.

“The vacancy funding gap will cost Nulsen more than \$1 million this year. That figure multiplied across WA’s residential service providers could force many not-for-profits to stop providing residential care or worse, to shut down,” he said.

In addition to the loss of vacancy funding, Nulsen Group along with other disability care providers are no longer allocated adequate funding for transport.



“People with complex disabilities in our care require specialised vehicles and assistance to be transported to medical and therapy appointments, services and outings such as trips to the park and local shopping centre, which are vital to ensure they get the best out of life,” he said.

Mr Trewern said the cost of doing business with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has placed additional pressure on the disability sector and the operating budgets of organisations.

“Nulsen will need to spend up to \$1.5m in rolling out new IT platforms and license fees to do business with the NDIA including claiming, invoicing etc,” he said.

“It’s costing Nulsen Group approximately \$400,000 in resources to facilitate the negotiation of care plans, including management of reviews and appeals with the NDIA and that is money that would be better spent on our residents.”

Mr Trewern said major gaps in NDIS funding to agencies within the disability services sector, such as non-cost reflective hourly rate and the lack of vacancy funding for residential care is forcing many organisations to cut programs and worse, service providers are shutting down.

“The disability services sector, people with disabilities and their families will be watching very carefully the delivery of the State Budget to see if the McGowan Government truly cares for vulnerable people in Western Australia,” he said.

## **ABOUT NULSEN**

Nulsen Group is a not-for-profit organisation that provides care and services to more than 200 Western Australians with complex disabilities. We have been part of the WA community for more than 65 years.

## **ABOUT GORDON TREWERN**

Gordon Trewern, CEO Nulsen Disability Services, joined Nulsen in 1982 as a support worker and was appointed CEO in 1994. His extensive knowledge and experience gained over 35 years gives him a unique perspective on the disability sector. Gordon is passionate about ensuring the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) enables people with complex disabilities to have the opportunity of a good life with choice and control over the services they receive.

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