



Sustainable Health Review 2017

About Rocky Bay

Rocky Bay is a leading provider of disability services, offering choice and independence to thousands of people of all ages living with any disability in Western Australia.

Serving the community for almost 80 years, Rocky Bay provides a broad range of services and tailored support to individuals living with disability and their families. Rocky Bay has facilities across metropolitan Perth and provides a range of services throughout regional and rural WA, including:

- Therapy and Assistive Technology
- Leisure and Independence
- Home and Community
- Training and Employment

Rocky Bay currently supports over 3,000 Western Australians living with disability and employs over 600 staff. Rocky Bay's operating landscape is undergoing significant change with the phased roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) across Australia. The primary change is the replacement of contractual 'block-funding' to a self-directed funding model that provides funding directly to people living with disability. The WA State and Commonwealth Governments are currently negotiating what the NDIS will look like and who will implement the Scheme in WA.

Disability, discrimination and access

An appreciation of person-centred approaches to disability requires a sense of what is understood by 'disability'. A disability is any condition that restricts a person's mental, sensory or mobility functions. It may be caused by accident, trauma, genetics or disease. A disability may be temporary or permanent, total or partial, lifelong or acquired, visible or invisible. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines disability as resulting from 'the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'.

It is important to highlight that people living with a disability do not compromise a homogenous group. Disability is complex and multidimensional; how an individual experiences disability depends not just on functional limitations, but the broader environment. Person-centred approaches to the care of people with a disability are designed to ensure self-determination and community participation.

Potential barriers to accessing healthcare

There are a number of factors that can make it challenging for people living with disability and other complex conditions to receive high quality and comprehensive healthcare, in addition to the services that enable people to live independent and fulfilling lives. These factors include but are not limited to historic and ongoing health inequities; primary care service delivery environment; challenging care transitions; budgetary constraints and increasing service costs; and the lack of a skilled and stable workforce.

Enhancing autonomy and self determination

The notion of self-determination is associated with equity, autonomy, and participation. The right to make choices as a way of enacting control over one's life is claimed for everyone, regardless of ability. It is acknowledged the element of choice can be limited for some people, particularly those with living with intellectual disability. It is important for the healthcare sector to understand that dependency and interdependency are part of all our lives; however, some people do require higher levels of safeguarding and support than others. Providing services that encourage appropriate levels of self-determination and safeguarding is critical to ensuring people have access to, and appropriate control over the services they receive.

Rocky Bay advocates for targeted and individualised support, rather than a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. For example, Rocky Bay provides a broad range of accommodation services in acknowledgement of the diversity of needs and wants of individuals and their families. Rocky Bay provides a high-care nursing home, group homes with 24/7 individualised support; independent living units with nursing support; and a broad range of in-home and community care programs and support options.

Looking to the future, the opportunity exists to better leverage the diversity of clinical and support services offered by organisations such as Rocky Bay. For example, some of Rocky Bay's accommodation could potentially be transitioned into short-term support services, providing an alternative to hospitalisation ('step up') and/or transition from hospital back into the community ('step down'), at a significantly lower cost than remaining in the hospital system. In a setting such as this, people with disability could benefit from 24 hour access to specialist clinical staff whilst receiving additional support to enhance capacity for living in the community.

Recommendation

- Undertake targeted research to determine how to enhance access, inclusivity and autonomy for people with disability in the healthcare landscape
- Leverage the specialist clinical and support services offered by organisations such as Rocky Bay to ensure a more sustainable healthcare system in Western Australia.

Technology and Innovation

Assistive devices and technologies are those whose primary purpose is to maintain or improve an individual's functioning and independence, to facilitate participation and to enhance overall wellbeing. They can also help prevent impairments and secondary health conditions. Examples of assistive devices and technologies developed by Rocky Bay's Advanced Technology Solutions division include devices as simple as tap turners and jar openers, to more complex digital devices that help control lighting, heating, security, computers and other electrical appliances.

Technological innovation also holds enormous potential for people who experience isolation, either due to geography or who experience difficulties leaving their home environment. For example, telehealth equipment can enable people to stay in their own home whilst their health status is monitored in real time through devices such as automatic blood pressure monitors and ECGs. Enabling people to stay in their own homes is equally as important as providing transport and access to medical facilities.

Recommendations

- Organise workshops, meetings and seminars to promote and facilitate access to assistive devices and technologies
- Provide funding to service providers to further develop their capacity to innovate
- Provide appropriate training to clinicians to enhance understanding and increase uptake of technological innovation

Coordination across the care continuum

Transitional care encompasses a broad range of services and environments designed to promote the safe and timely passage of people between levels of health care and across care settings. For example, transitional care may occur when a person is moving from a hospital to a nursing home. Alternatively, a person is also transitioning when they move from child to adult then to geriatric care.

Providing high-quality transitional care is especially important for people with multiple chronic conditions and complex therapeutic regimens, as well as for their family and/or caregivers. These individuals typically receive care from many providers and move frequently within health care settings. A growing body of evidence suggests that these individuals are particularly vulnerable to breakdowns in care and thus have the greatest need for transitional care services. Studies have

shown that improvements in planning can dramatically improve outcomes for people as they move to the next level of care.

Recommendations

- Promote better development and utilisation of individualised transitional care plans for people with complex needs in healthcare settings
- Encourage healthcare providers to involve partners, family members and care givers in transitional care planning

Changing workforce requirements

Changes to the disability and healthcare landscape is having implications for numbers and types of workers required. Workforce shortages are anticipated to worsen with an ageing population. If shortages persist, they will present a significant barrier to the streamlined delivery of care to people with disability. Anecdotal evidence also suggests some providers feel unprepared to provide targeted and relevant services for people with complex chronic conditions. It is critical sufficient training be provided to healthcare providers, in particular primary health practitioners, who play a crucial role in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and long-term management.

Rocky Bay recognises the importance of upskilling its workforce and is a Registered Training Organisation, providing training internally, to the sector and beyond. For example, Rocky Bay offers accredited courses such as basic first aid, manual handling and the CHC33015 Certificate III in Individual Support (Disability).

Recommendation

- Leverage the extensive training and clinical expertise of organisations such as Rocky Bay to help develop the Western Australia workforce

State Equipment Refurbishment Program

The State Equipment Refurbishment Program refurbished and reissued TGA certified medical equipment such as wheelchairs and mobility frames. On 30 June 2017, the State Government contract for the program was not renewed. Since this date, no new transactions have commenced; no new items of equipment have been received by the warehouse; and remaining refurbished items are being sold to the sector at significantly reduced prices.

The provision of refurbished second hand equipment enabled people with disability to purchase high quality equipment at reduced rates, in addition to removing the potential for usable equipment to be discarded. Wheelchairs and related mobility equipment are classified as 'medical devices' under the Therapeutic Goods Administration. The removal of the program not only has a detrimental impact relating to affordability and waste, but also increases the risk that purchasers seeking more

affordable second-hand equipment may risk buying equipment from online sites and auctions that do not adhere to relevant TGA requirements. This poses a significant threat to health and safety.

Recommendation

- Support the reintroduction of the State Equipment Refurbishment Program

Building capacity for inclusive service provision

Rocky Bay has a vision for the future where local communities and people with disability share facilities in an inclusive and positive way; where the silos of disability and community services are broken down in favour of a more holistic, whole-of person approach to supporting those in need. To achieve this, Rocky Bay's Mosman Park facility must be redeveloped to support a greater impact in optimising the quality of life for people living with disability.

Many services will be marketed and available to the general community in a move that seeks to promote the inclusion of people with disability and greater acceptance of disability within the general population. Such community access will also serve to prevent, delay and manage the effects of ageing and chronic illness (which left unmanaged, often leads to functional limitations or disability).

The proposed redevelopment will boost the capacity of services that are currently constrained by physical space and resources. It will support more people to gain independence and improve their quality of life; reduce reliance on hospitals, carers and medical support; increase participation in employment and community; and reduce falls, obesity, injuries and other potential disabling conditions. The project will support preventative action against functional decline, nurture a greater understanding of disability in the community and strengthen existing partnerships to create a comprehensive service model underpinned by the common purpose of working together to discover abilities. A recent impact assessment of the development found it will in part deliver a reduction in the cost of healthcare.

Recommendation

- Build capacity of not for profit organisations by supporting the developing of contemporary and fit-for-purpose facilities

Conclusion

Rocky Bay recognises the challenges that many people with disability face in engaging with appropriate health care services in a timely and accessible manner. Rocky Bay believes a 'one-size-fits-all' approach results in less effective and equitable care. Instead, Rocky Bay is focused on working with all levels of government, service providers, families and individuals to provide services that are targeted, appropriate, and genuinely respond to the needs of people living with disability. Rocky Bay is keen to share its expertise and offer support to the sector to ensure the quality of life for people living with disability is optimised.

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