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Getting the right NDIS for carers and the people they care for

Flexibility, choice and accessibility were the key themes that emerged when policy experts discussed the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), at the Carers NSW 2013 Biennial Conference: *Caring, Working, Living* last week.

Carers NSW CEO, Elena Katrakis said that the NDIS debate raised important issues that are relevant to all carers not just those who will be part of the NDIS.

"The NDIS debate looked at whether the NDIS will do everything it needs to do and as part of the discussion the speakers considered the needs of carers as well as the potential opportunities and limitations of the NDIS," Ms Katrakis said.

On the affirmative side, Scott Holz, State Manager, National Disability Services and Carolyn Quinn, Carer and Member of the NSW Carers Advisory Council focused on the benefits of individual funding packages which can allow carers and the people they care for to tailor support plans to suit their needs.

On the negative side, John Walsh, Partner, Consulting Health Unit, PriceWaterhouseCoopers (previously Productivity Commissioner) looked at the need for a financially sustainable scheme while June Riemer, State Manager, Aboriginal Disability Network NSW raised concerns around accessibility for Aboriginal carers in remote communities.

Ms Katrakis said, "There was a consensus that there needs to be a strong focus on getting the design of the NDIS right so that it provides carers with tailored supports and greater flexibility."

"Every carer's situation is different and it is vital that the NDIS takes into account the unique needs of the carer as well as those of the person with a disability."

"Often simple changes can make a huge difference in the lives of carers and the person they care for and the NDIS should allow for the implementation of a range of supports to suit the needs of those eligible for the scheme."

"At the conference we heard of a carer who only wanted some help in getting dinner ready at the end of the day so that she could spend more time with her children who have disabilities. It is such a simple requirement but could make such a big difference to both the carer and her children."

The draft National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) rules have been released and are currently open for public feedback until 23 March.

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