



Position Statement

ABC Four Corners - Careless: How the NDIS fails to protect our most vulnerable (Aired 25/9/2023)

As a group of community-driven autism associations and leading researchers from across Australia which collectively represents autistic people and their families across all life stages, the Australian Advisory Board on Autism (AABA) joins Australians in expressing our anger and sadness in seeing the deplorable services being delivered to vulnerable families and funded through the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The AABA seeks to drive evidence-based improvements to policy, programs, and practices so that autistic people can access high quality, safe, respectful, inclusive and effective services and supports, wherever they are and whatever their circumstances.

We draw particular attention to the so-called ABA-based therapy profiled in the program. This therapy was neither ABA nor evidence-based and is not aligned with any contemporary theories of behaviour and behaviour change. The methods the show exposed are nothing short of abuse.

We highlight our significant concern at the loose regulation of service providers which has resulted in a lack of accountability, and the limited recourse available to NDIS participants through the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, especially as the most vulnerable NDIS participants have neither the communication skills nor family support to lodge a complaint.

Currently, the NDIS funds services that do not have a clear evidence base, may be unsafe and of poor or questionable value. The lack of registration for many providers, and the quality of the registration system for those who undertake it at their own cost, is grossly inadequate, and does not lead to improved quality of services or positive outcomes which was clearly demonstrated in the report.

Unscrupulous providers who employ unverified or ineffective methods, or disguise what they do as evidence-based support, not only have detrimental consequences for clients, they undermine trust in the NDIS and all registered providers.

This highlights the need for a collective effort within professions to promote and uphold evidence-based practices, foster ethical standards, and address the challenges posed by unscrupulous providers to ensure the highest quality of care and service are provided.

While the NDIS has resulted in many positive outcomes, in its current form it has created a market in which unscrupulous providers and unregulated practices can exploit vulnerable people.

The AABA cares deeply about the supports that are provided to autistic people and their families, and hopes our recommendations will be used to inform the next iteration of the NDIS and create a safer, higher quality, and more equitable system for Australians with disability.

Pam Macrossan, Chair

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