



# New Directions for Disability Respite Services in NSW

A discussion paper inviting feedback

Version 0.1

Respite Directorate  
NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care  
March 2009



# Document approval

The ***New Directions for Disability Respite Services in NSW*** has been endorsed and approved by:

---

Brendan O'Reilly

Director-General, DADHC

Approved: 13 March 2009

Signature on file

---

Ethel McAlpine

Deputy Director-General, DADHC

Approved: 13 March 2009

Signature on file

# Document version control

Distribution: Website

Document name: New Directions for Disability Respite Services in NSW

Version: 0.1

Document status: Draft

File name: New Directions for Disability Respite Services in NSW

Authoring unit: Respite Directorate

Date: March 2009

# Table of contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>The framework for reform.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Disability respite services .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>The respite service system .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Why change? .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>The way forward: a responsive service system .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>15</b>

# 1 Introduction

The *New Directions for Disability Respite Services in NSW* discussion paper has been developed to assist in the reform and expansion of disability respite services<sup>1</sup>. It will guide the way future disability respite services are delivered, how people access those services, the types of services provided, the settings in which they are delivered and the development of new respite services across the sector.

*Stronger Together: A new direction for disability services in NSW: 2006-2016* commits the NSW Government to expanding existing respite services and building a more flexible and responsive disability respite service system. Also driving the expansion of respite services for people with a disability and their carers/families is the *NSW Carers Action Plan 2007 – 2012*.

In order to consider different approaches and better ways to deliver respite services, the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) has been consulting with a wide range of stakeholders and reviewing national and international research along with key research conducted locally by Interchange NSW and Carers NSW.

This paper broadly outlines the direction we intend to take to reform and expand respite services in NSW. We are now seeking your input to ensure we get the mix and balance of disability respite services right for the people who use them. With your assistance we are hoping to build a respite service system that is more responsive to the individual needs of people with a disability and their carers and families. The strategy will guide future respite service system reform, commencing in 2009/10.

DADHC invites comment and feedback from people with a disability, their carers and families, advocates and service providers. We have included sets of questions as a guide when considering your comments and feedback. The questions are a guide only and all input is very welcome.

Consultation on this draft paper will take place over a three month period and all feedback will be carefully considered when finalising the *New Directions* strategy. Feedback will be accepted up until Close of Business on Friday 26 June 2009 and can be posted to the Respite Directorate at:

Respite Directorate  
NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care  
Level 5, 83 Clarence Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Alternatively your feedback can be emailed to [respite@dadhc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:respite@dadhc.nsw.gov.au)

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper applies to disability respite services and does not include respite provided under the Home and Community Care program (HACC).

## 2 The framework for reform

The NSW Government, along with other states and territories, has entered into a partnership with the Australian Government to focus on the national reform of the disability service system. The objective of the *National Disability Agreement* is to place “people with disability, their families and carers at the centre of services across Australia”. It commits all states and territories to establish a service system which enhances the social and economic participation for people with disability and supports their families and carers.

The NSW Government understands the importance of respite for all carers and families who are caring for a person with a disability. It also acknowledges the significant role that carers play in supporting people with a disability. Guiding the way forward for respite services in NSW are two frameworks that clearly set out the vision and direction of these support services.

### ***Stronger Together: a new direction for disability services 2006 – 2016***

*Stronger Together* provides the framework for the delivery of services to children, young people and adults with a disability and their carers in NSW and commits to setting a new direction for respite services so they better support families and carers.

### ***The NSW Carers Action Plan 2007 – 2012***

The *Carers Action Plan* outlines the NSW Government’s commitment to the state’s 750,000 carers over its first five years. It recognises that better support for families and carers has significant long-term benefits for the whole community, not just for those being cared for. The vision of the NSW Carers Action Plan is to assist carers to achieve quality of life for themselves and the people they support.

The *NSW Carers Action Plan* sets out five clear priorities:

- Carers are recognised, respected and valued.
- Hidden carers are identified and supported.
- Services for carers and the people they care for are improved.
- Carers are partners in care.
- Carers are supported to combine caring and work.

## 3 Disability respite services

In New South Wales DADHC is responsible for providing a broad range of services for people with disabilities, including respite services.

### The purpose of respite

Respite services provide planned short term, time-limited breaks for families and other unpaid carers of children, young people and adults with a disability with the intention that families/carers resume care at the end of the respite period. They are services that assume the caring role during the period of respite.

Respite should be a positive experience for both the carer and the person with a disability with services providing positive and meaningful experiences for the person with a disability at the same time as giving the carer a break from their usual care-giving role.

As with many services provided for people with a disability, their carers and families respite aims to support and strengthen family relationships to keep families together.

### Principles

The principles that underpin and guide the provision and delivery of respite services in NSW are:

- services are person centred and genuinely inclusive – helping people to build their own support networks and make formal and informal links connecting them to the broader community;
- services are flexible to meet changing needs of individuals and carers with the right level of support provided when it is needed;
- services have a focus on early intervention by providing practical support at an early stage to prevent families from reaching crisis point;
- services are responsive to the individual needs of both the carer and the person with a disability;
- services are age-appropriate and have a focus on enabling the person with a disability to have similar opportunities and experiences as their peers;
- services are provided in ways that are culturally competent and respectful and meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- access to services is based on assessed need;
- services are provided in partnership with other government and non government service providers so that service delivery is coordinated;
- access to services is streamlined, enabling the carer to navigate the system with ease;
- services are developed using a strong evidence base; and
- services are cost effective.

## 4 The respite service system

The current service system in NSW delivers a broad range of respite services in three main settings;

- home-based;
- community-based; and
- centre-based.

Many people will receive a combination of respite services through the provision of flexible respite which aims to tailor support to meet individual needs and circumstances.

As respite may be one of a number of support services provided to a person with a disability and their carers it should not be considered as a stand-alone service. It is important that respite services are integrated with other support services which aim to better support carers in their caring role. For example, the Home and Community Care (HACC) program provides a range of services that assist carers and provide direct support to people with a disability such as assistance with dressing, showering and toileting; domestic assistance such as cleaning and meal services.

### Current models

The following gives an overview of disability respite service models currently being offered.

- *Flexible/combination respite* is provided in a range of settings. This can include care in the home of the person with a disability, with an alternative family carer, and/or provided in community settings through camps, holidays and social or recreational activities in the community.
- *Own home respite* provides respite in the home of the person with a disability and may be for a few hours or a few days. Respite can include the support worker staying overnight with or without the carer present.
- *Centre-based respite* services are provided in a house in the community where the person with a disability stays overnight or longer. Individual houses may have a specialised focus, such as children or adults, or may dedicate periods of time for a specialist focus, for example women or young adults. Centre-based respite is not provided for children younger than seven years unless the child has complex health care needs.
- *Specialist centre-based respite*. DADHC operates two specialist centre-based respite units that cater for adults and children whose primary disability is an intellectual disability and who have complex health care needs that require specialist care.
- *Host-family programs* are where the person with a disability spends time in the home of a volunteer family. Host families are volunteer families who are trained to care for people with a disability, particularly children. Care is taken to match host families with the interests and background of the individual and their families.
- *Peer Support* – People with a disability are supported in leisure and recreation activities that are provided by or with people of similar age and with similar interests.
- Before and after school and vacation care provides before and/or after school activities and support to school children with disabilities. Some involve integration with generic programs with assistance from support workers.
- *Emergency respite* is an immediate, unplanned, time-limited response to families and carers who are unable to provide care due to an unforeseen crisis.

## Other services that give carers a break

There is a range of other community based services that have a respite effect for carers even though this is not their primary intent.

- *Child care* such as long day care or family day care has a significant respite effect and enables the parent or carer to engage in other activities such as education or paid employment. The capacity of mainstream child care services to accept children with a disability is supported through the *Supporting Children with Additional Needs Funding Program* (NSW Department of Community Services) and the Commonwealth funded *Inclusion and Professional Support Program*.
- *Post school programs (Transition to Work and Community Participation)* assist young people to develop the skills they need to work towards their short and long term goals, increase their independence and participate as valued and active members of the community. Post School Programs are person centred, flexible and specifically designed for young people with varying disabilities and support needs.
- *Day programs* provide meaningful activities and offer a range of support services that are tailored to meet the needs of the person with a disability. Day programs assist people to develop and maintain skills relating to accessing and participating in the community, independent living and life skills.
- *Holiday camps* provide outdoor education and recreation activities in a specialist camp for children or young people with disabilities or in a mainstream holiday camp with specific supports.
- *Recreation and leisure programs* are specifically designed to enable people with disabilities to make friends and/or take part in recreation activities, camps, holidays or group activities.

## 5 Why change?

The three main factors which are driving the reforms are increased funding, feedback from our clients on the services we offer and key findings from our research.

The continued roll-out of *Stronger Together* funding coupled with the increased funding opportunities that have been made available under the Australian Government's *Disability Assistance Package* for older carers has given DADHC more opportunity to respond to the pressures of the current respite service system.

Under *Stronger Together* we have a commitment to regularly review and continually improve services to achieve the best possible outcomes for people with a disability and their carers and families.

### Client feedback tells us

Feedback from families and advocates identifies a number of pressures in the respite service system:

- There is a greater need for flexibility in the **range** of respite services available. Flexible respite services could provide recreation, leisure and social programs for children and young people.

- Families want more choice in the **hours** that services are available, for example, programs that are offered in the evening and on weekends.
- Some families want more capacity to control how they spend their share of respite funding.
- Services need to meet the changing needs of people with a disability and their carers.
- There is a need for the provision of additional supports at varying transition points for families, such as when children are starting school, entering high school and leaving school.
- Services are needed to support the needs of working families.
- There is a need for the provision of sibling support programs.
- There is a growing need to provide services for people who have physical disabilities.
- Services are needed to support people with disabilities across all ages including children who are under 7 years of age who have complex health care needs.

## Research tells us

National and international research and evidence-based practice has identified that respite should be part of an integrated service system which is able to respond to changing needs of individual children, young people and adults with a disability and their carers. There is growing recognition that respite is not a stand-alone service but part of a *suite of services* for people with a disability and their carers.

It is recognised that the needs of people with a disability and their carers and families change over time. Respite should also be considered as an evolving form of support that adapts to changes in client circumstances. The respite service system needs to respond quickly and flexibly to day-to-day needs and changes in people's lives. Carers need to be able to access respite services that are responsive to their individual needs, such as support to remain in or seek employment, to receive assistance when health issues or family crises arise, or to go away on a holiday.

In addition, research indicates that there has been a shift towards viewing respite as a service that provides a positive experience for both the person with a disability and their carer, in order to improve the quality of their lives, and to support their relationships. This must be considered when developing new respite programs.

Research also shows there is a **growing demand** for respite services due to a number of factors, including:

- the ageing of carers;
- changes in traditional caring roles as more carers, especially women, seek employment;
- people with disabilities are living longer and have increasingly complex care needs;
- an increase in the number of young carers; and
- an increase in the number of carers who are caring for people with challenging behaviours.

## Priority groups of carers

As outlined above stakeholder feedback and our research has highlighted a number of areas that require attention in terms of **how** and **when** we deliver services and **what** services we deliver. Research has also indicated who most needs respite services highlighting the need to prioritise respite support for the following groups of carers:

### ***Carers of people with challenging behaviours and severe disabilities***

Young adults in the 15 to 24 age group with challenging behaviours and severe disabilities are often excluded from family activities and other social activities. Research has also found that this group may have restricted access to respite due to their high support needs<sup>2</sup>. Expansion of existing services that are appropriate and targeted is needed to meet the needs of this group of young people.

### ***Young carers***

Many young people are not easily identified as carers, and may be overlooked by the service system. Approximately 5.2 per cent of young people in Australia under the age of 25 years are carers<sup>3</sup>. The literature identifies a range of potentially negative and significant effects on young carers including reduced life choices, limited future opportunities, serious risk of leaving school prematurely and poor physical and mental health.

### ***Older parent carers***

As people with a disability are living longer, the number of ageing carers is projected to increase significantly over the next two decades. Therefore, there is a clear need for expansion and increased flexibility of respite programs offered to this group.

### ***Working carers of school aged children (carers juggling paid work and caregiving)***

The economic cost of caring is related to reduced paid workforce participation, reduced income, and reduced health and well-being on the part of the primary carer. One quarter of carers report that their employment situation has been adversely affected by their caregiving role. Typically, out of school care is only provided for primary school aged children. Parents who are working or studying and have teenage children with a disability also need out of school hours and vacation care.

### ***Hidden carers***

Hidden carers include carers who may not identify with the word 'carer', be unaware of available services, be unfamiliar with models of formal service and support provision, or choose to manage alone for a variety of reasons. While many carers are well supported by family and friends and have no need for formal services, there are carers who are isolated, providing significant amounts of care and are not receiving the support they may need.

---

<sup>2</sup> Gill, P., Papachristoforou, E. and Cooper, V. (2006) Support for family carers of children and young people with developmental disabilities and challenging behaviour, *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 32,2, 159-165.

<sup>3</sup> ABS Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of findings, 2003.

## **Aboriginal and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) carers**

While the circumstances of families from Aboriginal backgrounds differ from those with a CALD background, both groups face potential barriers in accessing services. Barriers to access for both groups may include cultural barriers, such as lack of culturally appropriate services and lack of information in appropriate formats or language. When developing new services we need to have a strong focus on building organisational capacity to provide services to a diverse range of clients.

### **Discussion questions**

- ***What difference does respite make to you and your family?***
- ***What types of respite services have you used? What ones have helped you the most? Why?***
- ***What types of respite services does your family need?***
- ***Have you faced any barriers in accessing respite?***
- ***Are respite services available at the best times for you?***
- ***When do you and your family need respite?***
- ***Are there any other types of respite services you would like to see provided?***

## **6 The way forward: a responsive service system**

The first sections of the paper provide an overview of the current respite service system and the models of disability respite services that are currently being provided in NSW. The current system largely offers services that respite users and their carers and families have to 'fit into' and does not always have the capacity to respond to individual circumstances.

We have learned from our research and feedback that there is a growing demand for respite services. We have also learned that what respite users and their carers need is a flexible service system that can respond as individual needs change and where there is a greater range of services available. Carers and families also want more choice and control over the kind of services that they receive and want streamlined access to services.

We have started to respond to this feedback through the allocation of more than 1600 new respite places through *Stronger Together* but we need to do more. As we highlighted earlier, respite is a crucial support for some carers and families to maintain their caring responsibilities. However, respite does not stand alone, it is part of a broader system in which DADHC and non-government organisations provide a range of services to people with a disability, their families and carers.

This section of the paper outlines our proposed direction for the provision of a responsive service system which aligns with the broader framework of reform which is currently being undertaken by DADHC to enhance service provision across the disability service system.

In line with this broader framework our respite reform agenda is guided by four key themes:

1. Expanding services and developing new service models in response to unmet need
2. Giving individuals greater control and choice in the services they receive
3. Streamlining access to services
4. Building the capacity of the service system

## **Expanding services and developing new service models in response to unmet need**

In response to unmet need, work has commenced to expand existing services and to develop and implement a number of new initiatives through *Stronger Together*. These new initiatives include:

### ***Families Solutions Program***

Currently being piloted, the *Families Solutions* program is a three year inter-agency demonstration model for families under severe stress who care for children and young people with intellectual disabilities and complex behavioural needs. The program will provide intensive clinical support, case management and a flexible and effective host family respite service to families, who without additional support, may be at risk of relinquishing the care of their child or young person.

### ***Teen Time – After School and Vacation Support for Working Parents***

This program offers an after school and vacation program for secondary school students with an intellectual disability where they can spend time with their peers in age-appropriate activities. The program has a particular focus on supporting parents and carers to pursue work or work related study. *Teen Time* is being provided in partnership with the NSW Department of Education and Training and involves schools which have been designed and equipped for students with a disability, thus providing a safe and secure environment. *Teen Time* was trialled in four locations in the Department's Metropolitan North Region in 2008 and is currently being expanded across the state.

### ***Leisure Link***

This is a new type of leisure program for people with a disability that was developed in 2007/08. This program provides weekend and evening programs so people with a disability can spend time with their peers in cultural, social and recreation activities. A component of this program is targeted to young people with challenging behaviours and is focused on supporting young people's positive behaviours to improve their communication skills and expand their friendships through community based programs.

### ***Respite Camps for Teens with a Disability***

This program is currently being developed in partnership with NSW Sport and Recreation (NSWSR). Teenagers with a disability will be able to utilise existing Sport and Recreation Centres and expertise of NSWSR centre staff. The program consists of two streams:

- Stream one - mainstream camps  
Teenagers with mild to moderate disabilities participate in existing NSWSR camps with secondary students from the broader community.

- Stream two – specialised camps  
Teenagers with moderate to severe disabilities participate in specialised camps tailored to meet their higher support needs. Siblings will be invited to the camp and will participate in activities with teenagers with a disability. This program includes a tailored sibling support program.

## Discussion questions

- ***Do you know of any other service models that are operating well in other jurisdictions that we should consider piloting in NSW?***
- ***In what ways can we improve our existing services models?***

Further work is required to develop suitable respite services for clients at key transition points and for those with specialised needs, such as older parent carers, those with challenging behaviours or complex health needs. The specialist needs of people with degenerative conditions and acquired brain injury also require consideration. Further exploration is required to develop suitable and appropriate respite services for these groups.

## Services at key transition points

We have identified an unmet need for services at key transition points in the lives of the person with a disability and their families and carers. For example, access to age-appropriate after school and vacation care programs and recreational activities becomes important when a child starts school or enters high school.

In addition, the transition from child to adult services has been identified as a key transition point for young adults. While a number of support programs focus on the needs of young adults, for example *Community Participation* and *Transition to Work*, there is a need to ensure respite services can meet these specific needs.

We have started to develop respite services to meet some of these needs and we will monitor the effectiveness of these service models and continue to monitor research, practice and client feedback to determine how else to improve our services. We are also keen to have your feedback on other potential services that will address the needs of carers, families and people with a disability at key transition points.

## Older Parent Carers

DADHC, together with the Australian Government, has been funding a program specifically for older parent carers since mid 2006. The Ageing *Parent Carers Program* has four components aimed at providing additional respite, support and access to services. The four components are:

- Flexible Respite Packages;
- Flexible Day Options;
- Centre-based Respite; and
- Support coordination.

The *Ageing Parent Carers Program* is currently being evaluated to tell us which components are working best to meet the needs of this group and to inform future planning and allocation decisions.

In October 2008 DADHC began administering Australian Government funding under the *Disability Assistance Package* (DAP), some of which will create new respite places specifically for older carers.

## Discussion questions

- *What types of respite or other services are needed for older carers?*
- *How can respite services for older carers be improved?*

## People with challenging behaviours

The new initiatives through *Stronger Together*, *Families Solutions*, *Leisure Link* and the *Respite Camps for Teens with a Disability* programs have recognised the need for services for people with challenging behaviours. *Families Solutions* is specifically targeted towards families who have children and young people with challenging behaviours, while *Leisure Link* and *Respite Camps for Teens* have components within their programs that target this group.

## High support and complex health care needs

We have identified a need to explore further an efficient and effective response for carers and families of high support and complex health care needs, in both metropolitan and regional areas.

One strategy to support this group is to improve access to existing services by supplementing the staff of existing respite centres with nursing staff. Nurses would take responsibility for the specific health care needs of clients with complex health conditions in appropriately equipped and located centre based respite services.

## Clients with degenerative neuromuscular illnesses and acquired brain injury

There are groups who may not necessarily be existing DADHC clients because their primary disability is not an intellectual disability, for example people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Muscular Dystrophy (MD), Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) and Motor Neurone Disease (MND). Services for these groups are predominately provided by the non government sector.

We acknowledge that service access needs to be enhanced for clients with degenerative neuromuscular illnesses and acquired brain injury. Innovative ways in which the needs of these groups of clients can be integrated into the existing service system requires further exploration, as well as the development of new services that meet specific needs.

## Discussion questions

- *How can respite services be improved so that these clients can access them?*
- *How can services be delivered to meet individual need?*
- *What services are needed for these client groups?*

- ***How can these respite services be integrated with other services?***
- ***How can respite services be delivered for high support and complex health care needs in regional and remote areas?***

## **Giving individuals greater choice and control in the services they receive**

### ***Individualised (Packaged) Support***

The international trend, supported by a growing evidence base, is for people with a disability and their family and carers to have greater control over and choice in the services they receive.

DADHC is progressing the provision of individualised (packaged) support for some families and individuals. Individualised support will provide expanded opportunity for people to access portable funding allocated to support their goals and needs. These families will have a key role in determining the services they receive and how they receive them, which may include formal and informal supports from traditional and non-traditional providers.

Packaged support will allow families to tailor their own respite support services to meet their individual needs. Respite services may be combined with other support options to provide the right mix and balance of available services.

### ***Flexible respite places***

The expansion and enhanced responsiveness of flexible respite will ensure that services are tailored to best meet the individual needs of both the person with a disability and their carers and families. New models of flexible respite need to be innovative and offered at times when they are needed, including on weekends and after hours. In particular, the development of innovative models of flexible respite care should consider the following identified areas of unmet need for this service type:

- Social groups for adolescents and adults;
- School holiday programs;
- Weekend recreation and leisure programs across all age groups; and
- Appropriate flexible respite services for children less than 7 years of age.

## **Discussion questions**

- ***What degree of choice and control do families want?***
- ***In what ways can flexible respite be more flexible to suit individual needs?***
- ***What other activities could be provided by flexible respite services?***
- ***How can service providers work together to provide the right mix and balance of flexible respite activities?***
- ***In what ways can flexible respite services support working carers?***
- ***Would the provision of more tailored flexible activities reduce the need for some families to utilise centre-based respite?***

## **Streamlining access to services**

DADHC is working on a number of strategies to make access to disability services, including respite, easier, fairer and more transparent.

### ***Intake, assessment and eligibility***

*Stronger Together* commits to the development of an intake, eligibility and assessment system that is simple and transparent, is based on need and involves families in the planning and decision making. A similar commitment to reform access has also been made at the national level. Under the new *National Disability Agreement*, governments have committed to a national reform program which aims to provide a person centred approach to service delivery through a focus on simplifying access to disability services.

We are developing a consistent decision making process for intake to disability services that focuses on functional ability and needs, rather than on the type of disability.

### ***Regional initiatives to streamline access to flexible respite***

A number of DADHC regions have formed partnerships with non-government service providers to build local systems that make access to flexible respite services easy for carers and families. These include regional centralised allocation systems for flexible respite services to give carers and families equitable, streamlined and predictable access to flexible respite services.

### ***Respite Assessment and Booking System (RABS)***

We have begun developing a standardised assessment tool and an online booking system for all DADHC operated centre based respite services. The standardised assessment tool will capture both the individual support needs of the client and the circumstances and support needs of carers. A standardised assessment tool will give greater consistency around which clients are prioritised for centre based respite and will assist DADHC staff in determining the best mix of client and staff groupings.

Through use of this booking system, we aim to simplify the process of applying for centre based respite for carers and to give greater predictability for families when planning centre based respite.

To complement our work on the booking system, we are reviewing the forms used to apply for centre based respite with a view to improving the quality of information we collect and making them more user-friendly for carers to complete. Collecting better quality information will allow us to provide the best possible care to clients.

## **Discussion questions**

- ***How can access to centre based respite be improved?***
- ***How can access to other respite services be improved?***

## **Building the capacity of the service system**

*Stronger Together* acknowledges that the disability service system must be sustainable in the long term. A range of strategies are being implemented in DADHC and non-

government disability service providers to improve the system's capacity and accountability.

### ***Workforce development***

The client base for respite services is diverse and constantly changing. Respite services need staff who are skilled and able to respond to the needs of individual respite users. DADHC is working with the sector to develop and implement workforce development initiatives and strategies so that staff will be better equipped to understand and respond to the needs of the person with a disability and their carers and families. Work has also begun to:

- strengthen and enhance workforce planning across the sector.
- ensure the future workforce has the skills and expertise to deliver quality disability services.
- establish partnerships with health and community services sector and relevant industry bodies.
- create flexible and responsive workforce models to retain people in the workforce.

DADHC is currently working in partnership with *National Disability Services* to roll out an extensive workforce development strategy to further support staff in the non-government sector. We have also established traineeships for disability workers and valuable partnerships with a number of universities have been formed which aim to encourage new graduates into the workforce.

### ***Working with Carers Training Package***

The training package has been developed by Carers NSW with funding provided by DADHC and is currently being rolled out across NSW. The package was developed to support both DADHC and non-government organisations to understand and work more effectively with informal carers of older people and people with a disability. The package encourages staff to see from the viewpoint of the carers, and provides simple strategies for working together more effectively to support the family unit.

### ***Sector Development Strategies***

As the rollout of funding and places under *Stronger Together* continues, we recognise that, for the full benefit of this funding to be realised, the disability service system needs to be strengthened.

DADHC is continuing to work closely with service providers and families to ensure that services are managed in the best possible way and improved where possible. A number of initiatives have already been implemented and more are being planned to improve the quality of the service system. These initiatives include:

- *Quality Reform Project* aims to continuously improve the quality of the service system through the development and implementation of a DADHC Quality Framework.
- *Strategic Funding Reform Implementation Project* is a key component of DADHC's shift to an outcomes-based funding approach. This approach will help ensure that DADHC's investment in services delivers value for money as well as improved client outcomes.
- *Improving Service System Accountability* aims to build DADHC's capacity to support and monitor and improve quality in the service system through improved accountability. It aims to ensure providers meet clients' needs at the same time as improving our capacity to report to all stakeholders on what is being delivered.

In response to sector feedback, we have developed several resources for service providers to explain the way DADHC will fund services in the future and how we want to build capacity in critical areas. These include corporate governance resources, financial management training and support tools. The implementation of these strategies is critical for respite services and will assist providers to offer services that are well run and financially sound.

## Discussion questions

- ***In what ways can DADHC support the ongoing training needs of the NGO sector in relation to respite, particularly surrounding the service provision for clients with complex needs?***
- ***What types of specific training are needed for respite staff?***

## 7 Conclusion

This paper outlines the direction in which DADHC is planning to improve disability respite services.

Our goal is to provide a disability respite system that is truly flexible, responsive to need and promotes opportunities for both people with a disability and their carers and families to participate fully in the community.

Services should be offered at times that suit both the person with a disability and their carers and families. A broader range of programs and support options needs to be available to not only provide the carer a break from their usual care-giving duties, but give the person with a disability an opportunity to participate in a range of activities.

In addition to this, we need to ensure that improvements to the service system build system capacity and that services are sustainable and provide high quality, cost-effective services that are provided by well-trained staff. To do this, we are committed to continually reviewing respite services so we can invest in those that will provide the best possible outcomes for people with a disability, their carers and families.

We will continue to keep abreast of research and listen to our clients and their advocates so that our respite services remain responsive and appropriate and our resources are targeted to areas of priority need.

We have outlined a number of potential programs that will provide a greater choice of services for families that will focus on individual need. Access to services will be streamlined and the capacity of the service system will be improved.

We recognise that we will not be able to grant everyone's wish but together we can build a more responsive disability respite system that continues to evolve as the needs and aspirations of our clients change.