

To the NDIA

My name is ***** and I am writing this statement in support of my son *****'s NDIS application. In the paragraphs below I have set out the supports ***** needs, the support I currently provide and the impact on my own quality of life and relationships. ***** aged 44 lives with me and my husband ***** who is not *****'s father. His income is limited to Newstart Allowance with a sickness exemption, so he does not pay board and we provide most of his meals. ***** and I are aged pensioners.

***** has had mental health problems that started after a series of traumas, which culminated in a stay in a psychiatric ward 14 years ago. Over the ensuing years his mental health has required more and more frequent hospitalisation, his marriage disintegrated and he lost his family, his home and his business. Prior to coming to live with my husband and I, ***** had spent six months in ***** hospital. He has been with us since *****.

From a competent self-employed business owner/manager, ***** has regressed to a childlike state wherein he has trouble making decisions, has no incentive, needs prompting to shower, change his clothes, eat, take his medication and carry out most basic everyday tasks. Once prompted he is capable of doing most tasks, but often does not complete or tidy up after. He has many skills which are not used owing to his mental condition, diagnosed as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

***** is intelligent, has a degree in Natural Resource Management and on a good day can hold a conversation on practically any subject, but he does not have many good days. Mostly he prefers to squat outside on his own, smoking and using his phone to distract himself (not using it to make calls or send texts). He rarely answers calls or texts and has isolated himself from family, friends and former clients, who still try to contact him offering work.

When he came to live with us he was on suicide watch 24 hours a day. This was an enormous strain on my husband and I. He tried and failed and since being with us gradually the obsession with taking his own life has worn off.

***** has twin boys aged 15 and a younger son aged 7. His children cause him immense anxiety, partly because of the traumas he underwent all those years ago and partly because of his inability to be what he considers a proper father to them. We take him an hour's drive to ***** , where they attend school, for all occasions to which parents are invited. My husband usually drives. We also have the three boys staying with us whenever their mother needs respite and on special occasions such as birthdays, Christmas, etc. Either my husband or I go with ***** to pick them up and drop them back. He usually has to have long periods of rest while the boys are with us and after they leave, due to his debilitating anxiety.

I have had *****'s Power of Attorney in all his financial affairs, sale of his property, payment of debts, property settlement etc. since *****. I liaise with most of his supports, doctors, government agencies and his ex-wife.

Areas ***** needs support in

Health and hygiene. He needs prompting to shower regularly, clean his teeth, take his medication, change his bed linen, do his washing, hang it out, and bring it in.

Communication. He needs encouragement to communicate with friends and family, answer his phone calls and texts and work on relationships.

Finance. As one of his methods of self-soothing ***** likes to buy things. He has to be constantly reminded that he no longer has the financial capacity to indulge in anything more than necessities of a personal nature. I don't like him even buying food to share with us.

Socialising. ***** has no social life. He needs to be involved and interact with other people rather than with just us two oldies, safe though we are.

Housing. ***** needs a home of his own if he is to ever climb out of the abyss. He needs to be able to provide accommodation for his children. In his own home he will also need assistance in home management in the area of routine cleaning and maintenance. At present his younger son shares with ***** and the twins share a tiny room off the kitchen in our 2 bedroom house. It used to be our office. We now use the pantry/storeroom as our office.

Impact on my husband and I as carers

I am 74, have age related health problems (stenosis of the aortic valve, atrial fibrillation, osteoporosis and coeliac disease being the most significant) and my husband has significant health issues of his own, following open heart surgery and a fight with Golden Staff disease, which left him minus a sternum. He has recently had a hip replacement which has further reduced his capacity and can offer little assistance other than driving when required. My own health has deteriorated since having the strain and anxiety of ***** living with us. The cardiologist has told me I will probably have to undergo open heart surgery within two years.

We store *****'s household furniture and effects in our garage leaving us little space to store our own or to entertain. I have suffered an injury requiring several stitches trying to negotiate past the clutter to find something I needed.

We have had to curtail our own spending on non-essentials because of the drain on our household budget supporting *****. I have put off dental treatment for instance.

My workload has increased and I have had to neglect my gardening chores which provide me with a hobby and relaxation. When I do have time I don't have the energy.

Between us we have 9 children and 22 grandchildren all of whom have expectations of equal commitment from us and rightly so. My eldest daughter *****, has a son with severe cerebral palsy and requires support from time to time. My husband has a daughter, *****, a mother of 4, who has lost both kidneys and she also needs more of his attention than he is currently able to give.

I have a sister *****, who is caring for her husband who has only 40% lung capacity. She has a breathing problem also and is chronically unwell. I would like to be able to lend her support from time to time, but am too time poor and too exhausted most days.

Thanking you in advance for any support that may be forthcoming, *****