



235 Napier Street  
Fitzroy, Victoria 3065

**P** (03) 9416 4003

**F** (03) 9416 0850

**E** [info@valid.org.au](mailto:info@valid.org.au)

## VALID responds to the Disability Services Commissioner's report: *Review of disability service provision to people who have died 2017-18*

**The Disability Services Commissioner's report into the deaths of 48 people with a disability receiving services from a registered disability service provider tabled today in State Parliament is an urgent wake-up call.**

VALID receives hundreds of reports each year of people who have been put at risk because of poor practice in disability services. Many of the problems advocates see are simple to resolve if services were aware of and operating under accepted good practice.

But changes in the disability workforce are taking place so rapidly with mass recruitment drives, widespread casualisation of the workforce, and new start-ups emerging every day, giving rise to concerns that the impact of change, particularly for people with more complex support needs, will be their very lives.

Every person who uses a disability service should be confident that the staff they are paying are trained in their individual support needs, have read and fully understand support plans, and that these critical documents are regularly reviewed by trained staff. This should be standard practice in all services.

Assessment of a swallowing problem, the development of mealtime plan, and the training needed to do it properly is a team effort with input often required from a team of professionals. Supports for people with complex mealtime support needs must be properly funded. If a person cannot safely eat a meal, their life is at risk.

VALID welcomes the NDIA's recent announcement that people with complex needs will receive an additional 10% funding to account for the cost of providing intensive support. However, there remains gaps in the approval of supports in NDIS plans that allow for more shadow shifts, longer staff handover periods, regular and intensive training for staff, and high quality supervision.

It is unacceptable that people are dying because their documented needs are, at best, misunderstood, or at worst, ignored. Disability services need new solutions to ensuring that staff are well-informed, prepared for complex work, and can handle a crisis.

The NDIS must ensure that investments in provider readiness and market development are improving the practices that currently put people at risk of death.

The NDIS creates a unique opportunity for services to provide highly individualised supports to people with complex mealtime, communication and health support needs. The report from the Disability Services Commissioner leaves no doubt that urgent action is needed now.

Contact: Kevin Stone, VALID CEO, 0418 562 922