

Mapping the Future of Disability in New South Wales

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ABSTRACT

In association with population ageing, we are seeing an increasing number of people with long term chronic health conditions and specific disabilities living to older ages than has historically been the case. This includes people with severe spinal injuries who not only survive with these conditions but are now entering the years when age-related cognitive impairment and dementia are evidenced. This is an important consideration for people who are community dwelling and often living in relatively independent or at least non-institutional environments.

The lack of connectedness between various branches of the health and social care system mean that these types of people, with long term conditions, are likely to rely on an extensive network of formal and informal services to maintain their independence. This support needs to be maintained across their life span and the various events that occur including relocation, family issues and changes in their health status and function. Given these issues, the growth of the disability sector is likely to be significant in the coming years and disability rates in Australia are not yet declining.

GIS represents an important tool for supporting and enhancing contact between people with severe health conditions and widely distributed support networks. In addition, GIS can not only be used to help at the individual level but it can also support organisational change and learning as well as give some indication of the likely future patterns of disability and demand for services. This presentation covers an applied exercise done for an NGO supporting people with spinal injury in community settings.

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