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**AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE
“MAISS” NEEDS ASSESSMENT CONCEPT IN INFLUENCING
THE EMPOWERMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

**A Thesis presented in partial
Fulfilment of the requirements**

**For the Degree
Of Master of Philosophy
In Rehabilitation at
Massey University**

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1999**

Abstract

MAISS, (Managed Access to Integrated Support Services) as defined within Midland Health's service requirement definition, will be the single means of access to all support services for people with disabilities living within the Midland Health region. It must, therefore be considered, if not as the single most significant service purchased for people with disabilities then as one of the major disability service initiatives to have developed from the 1992 health reforms.

For people with disabilities, the manner in which the MAISS services are delivered, the level of skill of the people delivering the services, and the subsequent availability of flexible, responsive service provision, will be the test of the Governments ability to achieve stated health reform outcomes. These outcomes were clearly articulated by people with disabilities themselves within the Self Help and Empowerment document, developed from the Consensus Development Conferences of the Core Services Committee.

This research took the form of an evaluation of the impact which MAISS has had on the expressed feelings of self help and empowerment for one group of significant services users. The MAISS concept as delivered by one of three contracted providers, is examined to determine whether or not MAISS services are perceived by people with disabilities as having resulted in an enhancement of their perceived empowerment or mastery over the decisions which impact upon their lives. Judgments are made on the extent to which the MAISS concept and its implementation is seen to be supporting the enablement of people with disabilities. The research identifies those aspects of service delivery which most significantly contribute to expressed feelings of empowerment.

Investigation was undertaken through the development of a structured questionnaire. This questionnaire was used as the single means of data collection. The questionnaire was developed from a conceptual framework based upon the New Zealand Standards for Needs Assessment developed and promoted by the Ministry of Health.

The key recommendations made within this study relate to the need for assessment services to utilize assessment practices which foster the integrity and internal validity of the assessment process. The study also recommends that there needs to be a greater sharing of knowledge and accuracy of information in interactions between providers and consumers of services. Finally the research notes the need for continued investigation into the concept and implementation of services as defined within MAISS as such services continue to act as the major gatekeeper for people with disabilities seeking access to essential support services.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost I would like to express my grateful thanks to my supervisor Professor Steve La Grow. You have been very supportive, patient and encouraging as I attempted to undertake this work from a distance. As a result, my work has not only benefited from your wisdom and guidance, it has been brought to a conclusion, despite those periods when I did not believe I was able to summon the energy necessary to continue. Immense thanks also to the staff, committee and clients of the Waikato Multiple Sclerosis Society for giving of their personal time and information to support the research, most particularly to Leonie who was so positive and receptive. Special thanks to those people who undertook to complete the questionnaire, as it is your experiences, opinions and views which have given this research voice and meaning.

Special thanks to my loving and wonderful husband Kevin and daughter Yvonne. You have not only given me the time and space that could otherwise have been yours, you have assisted in practical ways, copying and stapling questionnaires, addressing envelopes, entering data, making cups of tea. More importantly, you have embraced the philosophical and social values which support the right of all disabled people to live powerful lives, and have therefore made a direct contribution to the substance of this research. Thanks also to Jan Scown who is always a willing partner in my scheming and gives me the energy and encouragement to believe in the power each and every one of us has to bring about change. She provides the common sense and moderation required to bring our schemes to fulfillment.

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