

New Zealand Productivity Commission
PO Box 8036
The Terrace
Wellington 6143

26 June 2015

RE: More Effective Social Services

My name is Alma Robertson

I would like to make a submission in response to Chapter 11: Client choice and empowerment.

I am a **Tetraplegic** and I use Individualised Funding (IF) to manage my support. In 1969 at the age of 12 years, I had a diving accident in the upper reaches of the Whanganui River which resulted in a fracture to my spinal cord in the area of C6 & C7.

IF has made a massive difference to my life. Before I moved onto IF, I had been supported by a significant package of care through various Home Support agencies over the years, life was stressful, frustrating and depressing due to the Homes Support agencies inability to be flexible and understanding in difficult situations.

Now IF has changed my life, I have never looked back, my wellbeing has improved since I've changed over to the scheme. I have freedom of choice to manage my own care within the home, without the stress and restrictions of agency policies that compromised my dignity continuously.

I have had my current support people for 5 years, and what a difference it has made to my life, my health and wellbeing and to my dignity. I now get the support I need when I need it from people who value and respect me.

The value of being able to employ my own staff is great, hours are more flexible there is no need to rush and short cut my needs due to time restraints placed on the Home Support agency staff. On average my employees have a higher rate of pay and safe working conditions under IF. The personal attributes that each of them bring, to the position in my opinion have been a caring, trusting and sympathetic approach to my needs which has made them better people personally and also toward others.

I know how I want to live and what I want my life to look like, so I am the person best placed to make decisions about how to achieve this.

I would urge the government to look into IF and see what an amazing difference it is making to people's lives.

Imagine what I could achieve if I had full flexibility with my disability supports and if I was truly able to choose the life I want to lead, just like other non-disabled New Zealanders.

Kind Regards,
Alma Robertson