



# **SUMMARY OF *REPORT ON ACCESS TO ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT EXAMINATION TABLES BY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY AT GENERAL PRACTITIONERS***

## **Context**

Following on from the 2006 survey of GPs across Australia, undertaken by Sheila King of *Access for All*, to determine the number of adjustable height examination tables in surgeries and the Open Letter from the Australian Human Rights Commission issued in 2007, the Physical Disability Council New South Wales (PDCN) conducted a survey of people with disability in 2008/09 to gain more information and further insights about the extent of availability of such tables.

## **Methodology**

The survey was developed by people who have physical disabilities associated with the Council. The final survey contained open-ended questions on the strategies employed by respondents when they could not access adjustable height tables. The survey was distributed in metropolitan, regional and rural areas of NSW.

## **Findings**

PDCN found 82% of people involved in the survey stated that their General Practitioners did not provide adjustable height examination tables. PDCN also found that:

- 1 in 10 people with disability are not examined at all
- 3 in 10 people are partially examined in GP surgeries

- nearly 1 in 10 people are required to attend hospital or specialists for examination on adjustable tables
- 1 in 10 people receive a home visit to receive an examination
- 3 in 10 people managed with assistance from doctors and/or carers and/or steps to access the fixed height examination tables

## Implications

Research has shown that people who cannot access adjustable height tables are more likely to not have access to either acute medical care or preventative medicine. In addition, they are also at risk of misdiagnosis or non-detection of potentially serious conditions. However, not only patients are at risk, but also doctors, nurses and carers assisting patients onto fixed height tables or physically supporting people in wheelchairs. In addition, adjustable height tables are also vital for older people and other people with temporary limited mobility due to accident or illness.

While there appears to be Government and professional body support of equitable health outcomes for all Australians the survey undertaken by PDCN shows that there has been little change in the availability of height adjustable examination tables and a continuing danger of inequitable health outcomes for patients with physical disability.

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