



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILLS

National Disability Insurance Scheme Bill 2012

Second Reading

SPEECH

Wednesday, 13 March 2013

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Wednesday, 13 March 2013	Source House
Page 1983	Proof No
Questioner	Responder
Speaker Pyne, Christopher, MP	Question No.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Manager of Opposition Business) (18:31): It is a rare thing indeed when an idea builds such momentum that it becomes accepted across the whole political spectrum. I can say without equivocation that this applies to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. As the Leader of the Opposition has said, it is an idea whose time has come. People across Australia have put up their hands to say that the current system needs to change. For many Australians with a disability there is currently no system or safety net at all. It is a shame that Labor has attempted to characterise this as a 'Labor reform' and politicise it. I see it as a reform all right-thinking Australians would support and do support. It is an entirely Australian reform, representing Australian values. All in this place agree that the current system of support available to Australians with a disability needs to change. People with disability and their families, their carers and all those supporting them deserve a better deal than they are currently getting. The coalition is committed to making this a reality and we have supported every step along the path to the development of the NDIS.

The agreement between the New South Wales government and the federal government demonstrates what can be achieved when the federal government adopts a constructive approach in negotiations with the states, rather than the adversarial approach of the last COAG meeting. That is why at the COAG before last it was disappointing that the Prime Minister could not rise above her partisan instincts. It is to the credit of Ted Baillieu and Barry O'Farrell that they continued to negotiate, in the face of public attack and misrepresentation by the federal government, and reached an agreement to host launch sites.

The NDIS is a once-in-a-generation reform that will unfold over the life of several parliaments. It therefore should be the property of the parliament as a whole, on behalf of the Australian people. The coalition has urged the Prime Minister to adopt a more cooperative approach, as there can be no NDIS without the states. They are partners, not enemies. It is now up to the Prime Minister to continue this constructive approach in discussions with all the other jurisdictions to conclude further bilateral agreement. Further expansion of the NDIS will be dependent on the Commonwealth negotiations concluding further bilateral agreements with each jurisdiction.

While we emphatically supported the government's commitment of \$1 billion to the NDIS in the federal budget, we have some difficulty in reconciling this figure with the \$3.9 billion the Productivity Commission said would be necessary over the forward estimates just for the first phase of the NDIS. It is imperative we get this right and we will require a very high level of consultation and attention to detail, not just now, not just when the sites are launched, but from now to its full implementation. To ensure this occurs, the coalition has called for the establishment of a joint parliamentary committee to be chaired by both sides of politics. A parliamentary oversight committee would lock in all parties and provide a non-partisan environment where issues of design and eligibility could be worked through cooperatively. The member for Dawson, George Christensen, has for some time put a motion in the House to establish this committee. Regrettably, it has not been brought forward for a vote by the House.

Senator Mitch Fifield, the shadow minister for disabilities, carers and the voluntary sector, moved a similar motion to establish the oversight committee in the Senate. He has done a marvellous job in advocating for people with a disability and for the NDIS. Labor and the Greens combined in the Senate to vote against Senator Fifield's motion. The Leader of the Opposition reiterated this offer in his Press Club speech this year when he said:

The Coalition is so committed to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, for instance, that we've offered to co-chair a bi-partisan parliamentary committee so that support for it doesn't flag across the three terms of parliament and among the nine different governments needed to make it work.

Only if we give the most careful consideration to the implementation of the NDIS will we get this right for all Australians with a disability. Yet the government, which likes to pay lip service to wanting cross-party support for the NDIS, does not support a cross-party committee. When the opportunity arose to give this real meaning, the government declined to do so. Unlike the government, we will continue to place this issue above politics and

are prepared to work with the Commonwealth and state governments toward a better deal for Australians with disabilities. I note that the Leader of the Opposition has reiterated in the parliament tonight that, if we are fortunate enough to be elected in September this year, we will introduce a genuine bipartisan committee co-chaired by the opposition and the government. We stand ready to work with the government to see an NDIS delivered as soon as possible. We believe we can do this within the time frame recommended by the Productivity Commission.

The coalition believes that the full implementation of an NDIS would be nothing short of a new deal for people with disabilities and their carers. Currently the level of support available to a person with a disability is dependent on a number of things—the state they live in and whether the disability is congenital or acquired later in life or through an accident or a workplace incident. But if you are born with a disability or acquire a disability it is a different story each time, particularly with waiting lists and queues. The bottom line is that this results in many people with a disability being left without the assistance that they desperately need. It is imperative that individual needs are at the centre and take priority. Individuals need to be able to pick the support, aids, equipment and service providers of their choice. We need a system of support that is based on need, rather than rationing, with the entitlement for support going to the individual. The NDIS is about empowering the individual, and removing government and unnecessary red tape from people's lives.

The coalition has a longstanding commitment to assisting people with a disability and their carers. The Howard government was trailblazing in support for carers and mental health in particular. I have been very lucky in my career in this place to have had opportunities in government to be involved with creating organisations and initiatives to help those with mental illness and disabilities. In 2006, as Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing, I established the youth mental health initiative called headspace. The aim was to change the way youth mental health services are delivered with an emphasis on youth-friendly environments and improved accessibility. Headspace goes from strength to strength; it remains something I am very proud to have been involved with and, in fact, to have created.

I might say, in an element of bipartisanship, the current Minister for Mental Health and Ageing has done a superb job at continuing the good work of headspace. When good ideas are agreed to, whether by Labor or the Liberals, new governments should not sweep them away simply because the previous government came up with them. But even from opposition it is possible to make a difference. You need look no further than the Leader of the Opposition, who 15 years ago started the Pollie Pedal, which is a bike ride that raises awareness and funds for various charities. Each year, the Pollie Pedal has been gone from success to success. Last year, \$540,000 was raised for Carers Australia. The next two Pollie Pedals will be in partnership with, and raise funds for, Carers Australia. Every year, the Leader of the Opposition invites me to join the Pollie Pedal; but, given my now ageing station after 20 years in this place, I fear that my best days of fitness might well be over.

Mr Briggs: You are not competitive?

Mr PYNE: I am, but he is very fit.

Ms Hall: Stop smoking!

Mr PYNE: Jill, for goodness sake, do not let the cat of the bag! Similarly, last year I had the privilege of addressing In 2 Life, which is a national youth organisation that supports Australia's youth by building help-seeking behaviours, coping strategies and life skills amongst peers. In 2012, In 2 Life launched their suicide prevention program, that was inclusive of a Facebook page. I was recently informed by Darryn Keneally, one of In 2 Life's directors, that since the introduction of the Facebook page the group has grown to approximately 23,000 members. The use of Facebook has provided another avenue for young people to engage in and utilise a significant resource of support.

Like many in this place, I have been involved with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and have met with many ambassadors from my own electorate of Sturt. Lorraine Pitman—the Family Voices committee chair—and her son, Thomas, have been fantastic ambassadors for JDRF. Lorraine has been involved with setting up workshops that assist people with type 1 diabetes to navigate through their challenges. In October last year, I attended the Walk for Juvenile Diabetes to raise awareness and funds for this group. I had the pleasure of supporting Oscar Lawrance from Sturt on this walk and the privilege to host him when he attended Parliament House in November for Kids in the House. Georgia Hall is another youngster from Sturt whom I have taken the time to meet with to discuss the concerns she has about facing diabetes. She raised a number of issues where the system is failing them. Along with meeting young ambassadors for JDRF, I have met with the chief executive

officer Mike Wilson. Through all these conversations and this dialogue, what has been very clear is the need for the NDIS to be a success, and the need for it to be incredibly apparent and transparent in people's lives.

I must also acknowledge the work of the Every Australian Counts campaign, chaired by John Della Bosca, which has sought to keep the NDIS in the public mind on behalf of disability organisations. I did speak at the Every Australian Counts rally—alongside the member for Mayo—which was held in Adelaide with David Hoist and many of my South Australian parliamentary colleagues. During this campaign, I was invited to attend the DisabiliTEA that was being conducted Direct Care Australia, a fantastic organisation in Sturt that specialises in nursing recruitment, and providing personal and domestic care. The morning tea was attended by local service providers and carers. It provided an opportunity to have an open and frank discussion about the need for a way to overcome the issues currently facing the disability sector and the need for successful implementation of the NDIS. Andrew Daly, the chief executive officer of the Royal Society for the Blind—which exists in the north of my electorate—has gone through his concerns with me on many occasions about the way the NDIS deals with blindness as a disability.

In my role as a shadow minister for education, I firmly believe that there is no shame in a learning disability; the only shame is if it is not recognised and treated to an individual's needs. We are calling for the use of modified curricula and instruction in education, appropriate assistive technology and extra time for learning as students with disabilities go through school. It is crucial for children who suffer from a learning disability to receive the appropriate diagnosis, treatment and support in their school. I am currently working with the Specific Learning Difficulties Association of South Australia, SPELD, to raise awareness of this by asking the parliament to formally recognise dyslexia as a disability and to provide funding to ensure that students with dyslexia receive high-quality intervention as soon as the diagnosis has been confirmed.

Dyslexia is not a sign that children are lazy or unintelligent; it is a genuine disability. Sadly, proper support for children with dyslexia has not always been available. Although attitudes are changing as people come to understand the condition more, there is still much work to be done. We need to ensure that all Australian children with dyslexia and other learning difficulties get the support they need. The NDIS, properly implemented, will dramatically improve the lives of people with a disability. A coalition government will deliver it for all Australians and will work with the Labor government for as long as it is in power to make sure that the NDIS is successfully implemented. I thank the House.