



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILLS

National Disability Insurance Scheme Bill 2012

Second Reading

SPEECH

Thursday, 7 February 2013

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Thursday, 7 February 2013
Page 399
Questioner
Speaker Hayes, Chris, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (10:23): I also rise to support the National Disability Insurance Scheme Bill 2012. This bill establishes the framework for the launch of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the National Disability Insurance Scheme Launch Transition Agency, which will administer the scheme.

More than 20,000 Australians with a disability, their families, their carers and service providers will benefit from the first stage of the NDIS at the five launch sites, in South Australia, Tasmania, the ACT, the Hunter region in New South Wales, as we have just heard, and Barwon in Victoria. By the full rollout of the scheme in 2018, approximately 140,000 people with disabilities in New South Wales alone will benefit from the NDIS.

This bill is a direct and very positive response to the 2011 Productivity Commission inquiry report entitled *Disability care and support*, which found the current disability care and support in Australia to be 'underfunded, unfair, fragmented and inefficient'. The report found our current system to be simply reactive to crisis, offering support to families only when they are unable to continue in a caring role themselves and have no other choice. The NDIS will allow for care and support to be administered at a much earlier stage, allowing for the possibility of improvement of people's functioning or the slowing down of the progression of the specific disability over their lifetime.

One thing I regularly do is meet with our disability support providers in various areas. I meet many of the clients and, importantly, many of their parents. One of the questions I am often asked is: 'What happens to my child when we pass on?' Unfortunately, the people talking to me as parents are often in their 80s, and their children are in their 60s, and for them this is still a very live and compelling issue to be addressed on behalf of their loved ones. This bill represents, therefore, a monumental step for Australians with disability, their families and carers to receive the support they need, when they need it, in order to live productive and successful lives.

Living with a disability comes at a high cost for the individual, the family and the community. It is time we shared the burden. Disability, like intelligence, follows the distribution of a normal bell curve. Having a disability is not just an issue for parents or loved ones; it should be an issue for a caring community, which I would like to think that we are. In Australia, someone is diagnosed with a significant disability every 30 minutes. Efforts can be made to avoid disabilities, but the truth is that most disabilities cannot be avoided. But we can do something positive to negate a lot of the stress and isolation that is associated with disabilities and ameliorate some of the effects or impacts upon people with disabilities that threaten their ability to be involved in our normal way of life.

We all know people with disabilities. Every member of this parliament would undoubtedly have attended the DisabiliTEAs and would be involved with various disability communities, as I am. I have also got a grandson with a disability. My grandson Nathaniel was diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum. I know the effect that that can have on the family. I know the impact it has on his immediate community, the school community. I know the effect it has financially and emotionally on all those who love and care for Nathaniel. We probably do not have to strive too hard to find within our families or extended families other examples like my grandson.

Therefore, the whole issue of national disability insurance becomes quite personal—at least it does for me. I want my grandson to be able to grow up in a community that cares, is welcoming and that will seek his involvement in the future. We would all want that for people with any form of disability. As I said, for me it is a very personal thing.

The NDIS is a national insurance approach to providing and caring for people with disabilities that shares the cost of disability and its associated support across the whole community. That is something that is appropriate for a caring community and caring society, which I say we are. Under the NDIS, for the first time in our nation's history people who need assistance, those who are the most vulnerable in our society, will receive individualised care and support packages and get access to comprehensive local support schemes. The fact is, for the first time we will have a large measure of support.

I am glad that the member for Barton is in the chamber. He will know, as his father was the President of the Senate at the time, that this fulfils the 1970s ambition of the Whitlam government, who sought to introduce a national compensation scheme. That is now more than 40 years ago. Compassion and inclusivity are not recent inventions. However, it has taken much time to actually bring this to fruition. The NDIS will allow people with disabilities to have more control over their lives and their level of care. They will receive a greater opportunity to live an active and fulfilled life in their workplaces, their education and their involvement in the community generally.

The bill, in addition to establishing the framework for the NDIS, also establishes the NDIS Launch Transition Agency. This agency will play the key role in administering the scheme by providing support for people with disabilities, their families and their carers and by building community awareness about the undertaking. Critically, it will also undertake research in various areas of disability. Importantly, people with disabilities and their carers will also have an active choice now in how to manage care and about their level of support. They will be able to develop a personalised plan for a regime of assistance, including goals, through this agency that best looks after them as they try to become involved in education, the workplace or the community.

This piece of legislation is critical if we believe in inclusion. While we as a society have done much to provide for our citizens in respect of a high quality of life—and that is readily apparent if you look anywhere overseas to compare—there are still people who fall through the cracks. The National Disability Insurance Scheme addresses to a fair extent this gap. It looks after people with disabilities and sets the platform of care and support necessary for inclusion in our community.

For many years, I have had very much a personal interest in this issue, as I have indicated. As a matter of fact, when I first became the member for Fowler I was asked by the media what my five key priorities were—at that stage, not many people knew me—to get a bit of a sense of what I stood for. Four of the things that I indicated then as my priorities were policing, youth unemployment, domestic violence and disadvantage. But the key thing that I identified at that point was disabilities. I am happy to now be part of a government that has taken as one of its central planks of policy providing for people with disabilities. Regrettably, some people are dealt a very, very hard hand in life. But this government is doing much now to care for them and for their children, not only now but into the future. That is something that all in this place should take heart from. There would be very few members who would come to this place without the ambition to do something good and decent and leaving that as our legacy. If we can leave a legacy such as a National Disability Insurance Scheme I think that we will have achieved much.

I am personally committed to this, as I have indicated. Tomorrow, I will be hosting another disability forum in my electorate. I do this on a periodic basis to make sure that not only I but those in my office stay focused on people with disabilities. When it comes to disabilities, we do not try and carve off what is federal, state or local government responsibility. I know that when people with children with disabilities approach me they do not want a lecture on where they can go. They just want support. Since I first entered parliament, I have always had a rule in my office that when it comes to people with disabilities we become a one-stop shop. We try to make life easier for people. I am very happy that tomorrow the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, Jan McLucas, will also attend this forum to answer questions from the community about the NDIS.

Importantly, while the NDIS is not being rolled out in my community, we need to make sure that nevertheless my community is looking at the various rollout sites, is cognisant of the research that is taking place and also contributes its positive and negative views about how this is changing people's lives in those rollout sites. We need that to happen so that when the total rollout occurs in 2018 government is aware of all that input so that it can make sure that what we have is a scheme that benefits most people.

I would just like to briefly mention a few of the people who will be there tomorrow. We will have the Australian Foundation for Disability—AFFORD—which provides employment, importantly, in my area for 1,400 people with disabilities. Disability South West will also be attending. They provide a much needed advocacy service for people with disabilities and their carers. Also, there will be Northcott Disability Services, who provide much needed support for people with rare forms of disability.

Grace Fava, who is a longstanding friend of mine, is also the Autism Advisory and Support Services co-founder and CEO. She is an individual who has strongly campaigned for the NDIS and who makes an enormous contribution through her role on the advisory council.

I cannot say enough about the steps we are now taking. It is something that is long overdue but also something that we should be proud of because we are taking the steps necessary for people with disabilities to be properly included in our community. I have often said that history will judge our generation on how we relate to and how we include people with disabilities. This bill represents the first step in a long way to go to ensure that—
(Time expired)