



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

National Disability Insurance Scheme

SPEECH

Monday, 19 September 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker King, Catherine, MP

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Ms KING (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing) (10:58): They say a measure of a society is the way that it treats its most vulnerable. That is a fairly discomfoting thought when you consider the state of Australia's disability sector. Early in August the Prime Minister released a report by the Productivity Commission into the long-term care and support for Australians with a disability, and I want to take this opportunity to put on record my support for a national disability insurance scheme and also commend the work of Every Australian Counts.

The Productivity Commission found that Australia's disability services system was unfair, underfunded and fragmented. The report states that fundamental change is needed to provide the kind of care we expect for people with disabilities. The Gillard government agrees. We commissioned the report from the Productivity Commission because we knew that the system was not working as well as it should and that reform was necessary. I know that across the electorate of Ballarat there are hardworking agencies and organisations and many generous and wholehearted volunteers doing much to make the lives of people with disabilities in our community as fulfilling as possible, but the government knows that there is much more that needs to be done. Many parents who care for their children with disabilities do not have confidence that, when they are too old or frail to shoulder the responsibility, the system will provide the right kind of care for their children. Some people with disabilities do not have the confidence that, when they need basic medical aids like a wheelchair or access to services like rehabilitation, which can help them get into training or work or into independent living, they will get the support they need. Australians who acquire a disability, or whose children or grandchildren might be born with disability, do not have confidence that the system will be there to support them into the future. The Productivity Commission has recommended that Australians should be insured against significant disabilities so that people with disabilities get the kind of care and support we expect for them and so Australians can have peace of mind that, if they acquire a disability through accident or disease, they will get the helping hand that they need. Reform of this kind does take time. The Productivity Commission has said that it would take at least seven years to transform disability services, but we do want to get started right away and I am pleased that the government has committed some \$10 million to commence that very important early work. We do have a lot of work ahead of us to deliver the kind of care and support for Australians with disabilities that we expect. This report is the first step and there are many, many more to come. Disability does not discriminate and can and does affect families every single day. We all deserve to have the confidence to know that, if something did happen to us, our partner, our parent or our child, there is a strong system of support in place.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper): Order! In accordance with standing order 193 the time for constituency statements has concluded.