




Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Record of Proceedings, 2 December 2020

**DISABILITY SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION (WORKER SCREENING)
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (6.55 pm): I rise to address the Disability Services and Other Legislation (Worker Screening) Amendment Bill 2020. The Liberal National Party will not be opposing this legislation. This legislation came before the House during the 56th Parliament and at a time when I was the Liberal National Party's shadow minister for communities, shadow minister for disability services and seniors, and shadow minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships.

Mr Nicholls: And did a fine job too.

Dr ROWAN: I take the interjection from the member for Clayfield. Whilst the Liberal National Party will not be opposing this legislation, there are a number of issues which need to be highlighted to all members of the House.

On 18 June 2020, the former Labor minister for communities and minister for disability services and seniors, Hon. Coralee O'Rourke, introduced this legislation into the Queensland parliament. It was then referred to the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee for detailed consideration and examination. The committee tabled its report to the Queensland parliament on 3 August 2020 with one recommendation—that being that the legislation be passed. In the 57th Parliament we have had the legislation reintroduced by the current minister, the Hon. Craig Crawford.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme is one of the most transformational economic and social policy reforms that our state of Queensland, and in fact our nation, has seen in over a generation. Indeed, not since the introduction of Medibank in 1975 or Medicare in 1983 have we seen a more substantial set of reforms than the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which will continue to transform the lives of people with a disability, their families and carers, and the way in which support and ancillary services are delivered.

As I have said before in this House, this significant reform has had the unequivocal bipartisan support of the Liberal National Party since the scheme's inception. That continues through to today and well into the future. Such reform takes time to conceive, to properly consider and to further evolve parameters to communicate, to expand, to transition and to adjust or amend as necessary. It takes time but it is also important that we get it right.

As the former Palaszczuk Labor minister for disability services outlined in her introductory speech, the broad purpose of the National Disability Insurance Scheme worker screening is to establish a system that will assess whether a person who works or seeks to work with a person with a disability potentially presents any unacceptable risk or harm to that individual. Again, as the former Labor minister articulated, this legislation will therefore meet Queensland's commitment under the NDIS to implement nationally consistent worker screening whilst continuing current state screening for disability services outside of the NDIS. This is what the new minister, Hon. Craig Crawford, indicated when he reintroduced this legislation into the Queensland parliament during the last sitting week.

In examining the finer detail of this legislation and, as per the explanatory notes, the objectives of this bill are, firstly, to support nationally consistent worker screening for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the Intergovernmental Agreement on Nationally Consistent Worker Screening for the NDIS; secondly, to enable Queensland to operate a state disability worker screening system for certain disability services that it continues to fund or deliver outside of the jurisdiction of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, known as the NDIS commission; thirdly, to streamline and strengthen the legislative framework for disability worker screening in Queensland; and, fourthly, to ensure the blue card system operates effectively and efficiently alongside the disability worker screening system and the strongest possible safeguards are maintained in relation to persons working with children with disability.

Accordingly, this bill seeks to make a number of amendments to existing legislation including amending the Disability Services Act 2006, the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 and the Evidence Act 1977. There will also be consequential amendments made to the Guardianship and Administration Act 2000.