



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

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DISABILITY SERVICES (YOUR LIFE YOUR CHOICE) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr GIBSON** (Gympie—LNP) (8.55 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Disability Services (Your Life Your Choice) Amendment Bill and, in doing so, at the very outset I say to the minister: congratulations. It is very rare in this place that we have an opportunity to pass a piece of legislation that will not only make a difference but make a difference in such a fundamental way that will really impact on people's lives and change the way government does business. This piece of legislation is a credit to the minister and her department and particularly in the way in which it has been done within the context of the NDIS—which, to be frank, has been used as a political football by those who wish to politicise what is a necessary change across this country in the way in which we fund disability services. The minister has done this with this particular bill and has done so in a way that will bring about changes that are needed.

This bill amends the Disability Services Act 2006 and is necessary to fully implement the recently launched Your Life Your Choice Self-Directed Support Framework. This framework is important because it increases the choice and control for a person with a disability over their funding and supports by allowing a person to self-direct their funding in two ways: (1) by working with an approved host provider to plan and purchase their disability supports; or (2) by receiving the funding directly. This second model is the one by which we are empowering those in our community who have disabilities but have the capacity and capabilities to choose those services that they need.

We are now focusing on providing more opportunities for choice and control to those people who have a disability. I am very proud to be part of a government that recognises that empowering those in our community who are disabled and giving them choices and providing the funding mechanisms to be able to do that is about not only aligning Queensland well for the future in transitioning to the NDIS but actually sending a strong message, a message to those in our community who are disabled that says, 'We respect you, we value you and we are giving you the choices that you should be making.'

Self-direction through a host provider model is possible under the current Disability Services Act as funding is to be provided to a disability service provider as a broker or intermediary. However, as indicated, this bill will allow funding to be provided directly to individuals. That is a fundamental shift and one that is necessary.

The bill inserts a new part into the act which will provide for the minister to approve funding directly. Definitions for the new part are included such as for the term 'relevant disability services' for which funding can be provided. The term 'relevant disability services' captures both supports and services that are currently considered disability services under the act, as well as other care and support associated with the person's disability. This means that the types of supports that can be purchased are not just limited to the definition of 'disability services' in section 12 of the act.

While the amendments allow for a wide range of supports to be chosen, these supports must still be associated with a person's disability. From my experience of people in the deaf community, this will open up some opportunities that have not been available. I know there is a great deal of excitement—and perhaps the minister will have the challenge of managing expectation as the broader community wishes to take on all these things—but it is such a fundamental shift. People with disabilities are now talking about

particular services in particular areas that in the past they only ever dreamed about being provided for them and are now saying, 'I have the right to shop for those services. I have the right to choose.'

To talk about my electorate of Gympie—and I have spoken about this often—we are a fairly autonomous area. We sit either at the top end of the Sunshine Coast or at the bottom end of Wide Bay and we get forgotten by both. As a result, we just get on and do it. There are many associated incorporations which over the years have developed within the community for the provision of services that have not previously been provided. Those associated incorporations and those organisations are really excited now. They are talking about this new funding model and how they can gear up. Instead of having to work through a very rigid framework that was imposed upon them by the requirements of the department, they will now be able to structure their services to meet what the clients want—what the people with disabilities want. I think that is great for regional and rural Queensland, because often we miss out. Often the services that can be provided in capital cities and in large cities across the state are not able to be provided in regional areas, not from a lack of wanting to provide the service but because we do not have an organisation established through which the funding can be put. We are now going to see a significant shift and the flexibility that has so desperately been needed and that people have been crying out for. It is wonderful that we have a minister who understands this and who is delivering this across all of Queensland.

The great thing about our state is that it is decentralised, but for those with a disability it means that if they do not live in a capital city in many cases—and let us be blunt—they are treated as second-class citizens because their communities are unable to provide those services. Now we are seeing the flexibility that will communicate to them, 'We value you, we respect you and we can provide those services for you.'

I look forward to the implementation of this bill should it be passed tonight—and I note the bipartisan support and look forward to it being passed. These amendments will form part of the second phase of the rollout of the Your Life Your Choice framework. Phase 1 is a trial of the host provider model offered to approximately 1,300 people receiving ongoing funding with stable support needs. Phase 2 will be the rollout of direct funding, which will commence in the first half of 2013. Like other jurisdictions, the amendments will take a light-touch approach, with detail about direct funding arrangements to be set out in policies and procedures. I note that the department is co-producing these policies and procedures with the disability sector. Again, it is what we would think to be common sense but invariably has not been happening in the past. There has been this direction model as opposed to a consultative model. I commend the minister for taking that approach.

As is the case and should be the case whenever we are dealing with public funding, safeguards need to be put in place. Under these direct funding arrangements, a person may choose to access a service that is not regulated under the DSA, which means a provider is not subject to the requirements of the DSA—for example, complying with the disability sector quality system, criminal history screening and the restrictive practices regimes. In rolling out direct funding, there will be a significant focus on providing people with a disability with access to information and resources to make informed choices about the services they are accessing.

When I was at university I took on a job for about nine months which for a university student was one of the best jobs you could get, and that was the night shift disability carer at a group home. I would turn up about six o'clock in the evening. They would all be fed and bathed and I would do the night shift. These were young kids with disabilities. We would get them into bed at nine o'clock and I got paid to sleep until about six in the morning when we got them up—

A government member: The job hasn't changed!

Mr GIBSON: I won't take that interjection. They were not living in a home environment. It was a group home. It was what was established at the time. The kids were provided with the best care possible, but you look back upon that now and you cringe to think that is how we delivered services to those in our community who are the most vulnerable. The changes that have come about today mean that we will now engage with people with disabilities with respect, treat them as equals and advance in a manner that says they stand side by side as citizens of this great state of Queensland. We as parliamentarians are making a change that is empowering them not just for tomorrow, not just for next week or the next month but for the rest of their lives. The minister can be truly proud of such a significant change. This piece of legislation is probably one of the greatest pieces of legislation I have had the experience of being in this parliament to see passed, and I am proud to be part of a government that has brought about this change. I commend the bill to the House.