




Speech By  
**Jason Costigan**

**MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY**

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**DISABILITY SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—LNP) (5.53 pm): I rise tonight to make a brief contribution in support of the Disability Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I have no doubt that all honourable members in here can relay stories from their own electorates, their own communities, their own families of people who have had to deal with adversity in the disabilities sector. There is no doubt that disability services have come a long, long way over the last couple of decades.

It was 65 years ago this year that we saw the establishment of the Cootharinga society of North Queensland.

**Ms Davis:** They're wonderful.

**Mr COSTIGAN:** I take the interjection from the member of Aspley. That is a wonderful organisation that has served the North Queensland community magnificently over the past 6½ decades. It has rolled out services in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, the Burdekin, the Tablelands and Mount Isa. It has certainly come a long way from the embryonic days as the North Queensland Society for Crippled Children.

The name Cootharinga, for those trivia buffs, is the old name for that North Queensland icon that stands like a beacon over the city of Townsville. Of course, I am referring to Castle Hill. I particularly acknowledge the directors and volunteers of Cootharinga over the years who have been there supporting the staff in the delivery of services. I particularly want to acknowledge iconic North Queensland businessman Allan Parry. He gave many years service to Cootharinga. I salute Allan for that service. I am sure the people of the city of Townsville, where I lived in the past, and other places around the north acknowledge his contribution to Cootharinga.


It is marvellous to see new blood coming through the ranks. I acknowledge my good friend Wade Chiesa. Nowadays he is part of the Cowboys call team on 4TO FM. I worked with Wade before coming into this place. I know that Cootharinga is very dear to his heart. He does some terrific work at Cluden racecourse promoting the good cause that is Cootharinga.

Col McPherson runs the office for Mackay and the Whitsundays. I have known Col for a long time through Rugby League—the sport that brings the people of North Queensland together. Col has been doing a terrific job in flying the flag for Cootharinga in Mackay and the Whitsundays.

There is no doubt that there are many other providers in this space. One that comes to mind is the Endeavour Foundation. For as long as I can remember a cousin of mine Robert Mackenzie came in from Calen in the cane fields in the rural heart of my electorate to Eva Musset Park on the north side of Mackay. I know that his family were very grateful for the service that Endeavour provided for people like Robert. That is a long time ago.

There are a number of people in the Whitsunday community who come to mind because they have had to deal with adversity. One of those is Alan Dufty, the Paralympic legend who represented his country in the UK in 1984, in Seoul in 1988 and then in Barcelona in 1992. Alan came to the Whitsundays in the early 1970s.

Like many people coming to North Queensland, he came to the place that I call paradise in search of opportunity. Unfortunately, due to an accident in 1973 Alan would be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. He began work with the Proserpine shire council in 1975 and the following year he said, 'Let's get into it.' He started playing sport in spite of what had happened to him. He went on to compete at various levels.

 **Mr COSTIGAN** (Whitsunday—LNP) (7.31 pm), continuing: As I was saying prior to the dinner break, Alan Dufty is a local legend in the Whitsundays after attending three Paralympics—'84, '88 and '92. Whilst before my time when he came back from the UK—I was a young boy growing up in Mackay—I remember reading the press reports of the day as he came back to the great sugar milling town. There was a huge parade. In fact, many people who came out on the main street of Proserpine last year to celebrate the presence of the Queensland State of Origin team were there in the aftermath of Alan's heroics in 1984. Alan and his wife, Olga, have been a fixture in our local community and contribute to many great causes. They were in business for a number of years in the upholstery game and Alan also later acquired some laundromats and other business ventures, but of course he is now retired.

It would be remiss of me not to recognise his contribution to local government. It is part of local folklore in the Whitsundays that one of his first jobs was to find out how to get his wheelchair into that place—literally. That is still talked about on the streets of Proserpine today. In fact, Duff, as we know him affectionately, and I have had our differences over the years. I can remember him coming into my office and he had the hide to turn up in a sky-blue New South Wales State of Origin jumper. He never forgot to remind me that that is where he came from—from the Riverina, a great part of the world. He would proudly wheel himself into my office wearing that sky blue jumper as a proud cockroach.

He is not the only Paralympian from our part of the world. David Nicholas, a local cyclist, has been capturing the imagination of many local people with his heroics. I acknowledge David's outstanding achievements on the world stage and in more recent years. Alan Dufty has been a great advocate for disability services in the community. He is still involved in the community through Proserpine Senior Living which offers nearly 50 units for independent living for over-65s in the Whitsundays. It is Alan who continues to bang the drum for greater disability access to even basic facilities and shopfronts in the main street of Proserpine, including the Department of Transport and Main Roads. That is an issue that has not gone away. Those access points are available in the provincial cities up and down the coast, but in the country towns there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. I acknowledge Alan's advocacy in that space.

It would be remiss of me not to reflect on the life and times of a cousin of mine, Noel Costigan, who came back from the Korean War—the forgotten war. After serving in the Pacific theatre of World War II and surviving that conflict, he went to the Korean Peninsula. He did come home, but unfortunately Noel Costigan never walked again and was confined to a wheelchair. I carry his middle name to this day and I understand that that is how my mother was named when she was born. Noel came back from Korea and in little Walkerston on the outskirts of Mackay it is also part of folklore how the local community rallied to put a concrete ramp out the front of the iconic Duke of Edinburgh Hotel so he could not only cross Dutton Street but wheel himself into the Duke, as it is known locally, and have a few beers with his mates. That went on for decades, but of course he has since passed on.

As I have said, disability services have come a hell of a long way and we have many people to thank for that. I talked about the great people of Cootharinga North Queensland earlier, formerly the North Queensland Society for Crippled Children, and the Endeavour Foundation and other agencies that are out there doing their bit. It is also important that we do recognise those volunteers. Tonight I just came from the Queensland Catholic Education Commission parliamentary reception. I had the privilege of listening to His Grace Archbishop Mark Coleridge. Our mutual friend the late Alby Schultz had to deal with a disability in his later life. Some people would say that Alby was pretty one-eyed as the member for Hume. He did lose the sight of one eye and I know that, having known the family very well for a long time, Alby had to deal with that. He represented an electorate the size of Belgium and had to deal with that on the back of an accident that happened at Cootamundra many years ago.

In closing, this is enabling legislation that paves the way for the local implementation of the NDIS. It does have bipartisan support. It has had it for a long time. The argy-bargy has been over the money—let us not kid ourselves—about how we are going to fund this across the various jurisdictions. It was pleasing to see the trial sites coming online at Aurukun, Palm Island and Townsville. Needless to say, I know people in some of those places and I am sure it is going to be well received and we look forward to seeing how those trials operate when they start on 1 April—not too far away. In closing, it is tremendous to rise to speak on this piece of legislation. It is an important part of public policy, and I commend the bill to the House.