




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Record of Proceedings, 15 March 2016

DISABILITY SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (7.59 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Disability Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. Queenslanders living with disability, their families and carers are really looking forward to the early transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme later this year. I cannot say how many times this has been raised with me as the member for Ipswich. It is a long awaited national scheme and it is a new way of providing support to people with disability. However, as with all new things, this government understands there will be teething problems.

As Queensland transitions to the NDIS, customers who are registered with the scheme will receive funding directly from the federal National Disability Insurance Agency so that they can purchase services. At the same time, there will be customers who are not registered with the scheme. During this transition period, it is vital that those clients continue to receive care and services through the state operated system. I understand that existing contracts between the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and clients in the disability sector will be phased out as the NDIS rollout proceeds. The loss of this link to the state operated disability provider will remove the Queensland government's influence over service delivery and, with it, any safeguards or protections will be lost.

I do not have to explain to this chamber that clients and their families and carers in the disability sector are particularly vulnerable. It is vital that all Queenslanders receiving disability support under the NDIS have the same level of safeguards as those receiving disability support funded by the Queensland government. While the NDIS will bring with it many opportunities for independence and tailor-made service delivery, it may also lead to larger numbers of clients falling through the cracks. A robust, independent and strong legislative framework is essential to ensuring that clients' needs are being met and that the services provided are of the highest quality.

I understand this amendment bill will ensure the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services has the necessary powers to monitor clients of NDIS non-government service providers. These amendments will ensure that we do not find ourselves with a two-tiered disability support system, where safeguards diverge widely as a consequence of the funding arrangements. I commend the Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Seniors and Minister Assisting the Premier in North Queensland for the work undertaken in consultation over these changes.

The disability sector is large and diverse. Even in my own electorate there are many different organisations, all with specific views about NDIS and its potential impact. I wish to pay particular attention to one of those organisations in my electorate, CATS or Community Access and Transition Service Inc. It is run by the wonderful and very able Katrina Johnson. It is an Ipswich organisation created by the parents of young people with disabilities. This small group of parents were concerned about the future of their sons and daughters. While at school, those young people receive a great deal of stimulation and opportunities for personal development. However, once the children finish school, as

young adults the opportunities for community engagement and participation are not as readily available. The parents rightly were concerned that their sons and daughters would leave school and go on to do nothing, losing acquired skills and stagnating in their own personal development.

In an attempt to halt this progression, CATS Inc. was established. That local Ipswich organisation now provides individual and group support, as well as educational opportunities, life skill courses and resources for carers and families. The spinoff has been the creation of friendships, the sharing of common interests, the creation of hobbies and pastimes and the opportunity for young people with disability to engage actively with their community. I commend CATS Inc. for the work that they do in my electorate as they really are extraordinary. I also commend them for the work that they are doing to get their clients ready for the NDIS.

I do not have time to mention all the disability service providers in my electorate, but two are standouts: Alara and Focal Extended Inc. Organisations such as those have been engaged in the conversation about the NDIS and are providing this government with feedback and advice on how the new system will operate and any pitfalls that we need to be aware of. I am proud to say that this legislation delivers on a promise to ensure that those in the disability sector in Queensland will still be heard long after the NDIS rolls out finally in 2019.