




Speech By  
**Peter Russo**

**MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK**

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**DISABILITY SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr RUSSO** (Sunnybank—ALP) (5.14 pm): This afternoon I rise to speak in support of the Disability Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and to give voice to what I have heard over and over again from my constituents in Sunnybank. Anticipation for the National Disability Insurance Scheme is high in my area, with various community organisations holding seminars and distributing materials in anticipation of the rollout. We have heard this over and over, but the NDIS will revolutionise the way people with disability will access their services. When you are in a position where your ability to go to work or to university or even just to the grocery store hinges on the quality of the services available to you, these improvements are life changing.

The NDIS is the legacy of the Gillard Labor government. It is based on an investigation by the Productivity Commission in 2011 which concluded that the existing disability services system was ‘underfunded, fragmented, unfair and inefficient’. The commission’s report uncovered some shocking truths about the standards people with disability have been subjected to—standards that generations of governments have turned a blind eye to. The structure of the NDIS was developed in response to these commission findings. It works in a similar way as our Medicare system in that every Australian with a permanent or significant disability who needs support will be entitled to it. The federal government anticipated that the NDIS would affect around 760,000 Australians with severe or profound disability.

The scheme shifts the focus on to the individual. It requires the creation of a targeted and flexible whole-of-life strategy through consultation with the participant, their families and their carers. This includes consideration of the goals and aspirations of the participant and the creation of strategies to facilitate the desired interaction within the wider community. NDIS participants can choose their own service providers within the program and have the power to change if desired. For Queenslanders with disability, perhaps the most basic and integral outcome of the NDIS is the certainty that they will continue to receive the support they need over their lifetime. The scheme is funded by the Commonwealth and the state and partly by a 0.5 per cent increase in the Medicare levy.

On introducing the act into the federal parliament, former prime minister Julia Gillard said that the NDIS was a ‘united embrace of national responsibility and a great act of mutual care and solidarity’. In my opinion, the use of the term ‘national responsibility’ is key to this debate. As a society we have a responsibility to care for those in need and to ensure that they have access to a dignified life. This includes not only access to the basics we need to survive but also self-determination and, as far as possible, the opportunity to live out our individual goals and aspirations. The Commonwealth legislation was passed with bipartisan support in 2013 and, in the years since, Australian governments have been working together to prepare for the program’s implementation.

As a state MP, I have had great pride in informing my constituents, especially those with disability and their families, that our government is currently fast-tracking the implementation of the NDIS. That being said, the Premier and her ministers are determined to ensure that this enormous undertaking will be carried out smoothly. These reforms will affect the whole of the Queensland government and the

Minister for Disability Services has spent a large amount of her time over the past year reviewing all legislation and identifying areas that need amending. The focus of this bill is to ensure the transfer of our currently existing quality and safeguard frameworks for service providers to the new system. In particular, this bill ensures that the standards regarding complaints management processes, criminal history screenings and restrictive practices frameworks are not lost as direct funding contracts are phased out.

It will also establish a body to conduct independent quality reviews of NGO service providers and to monitor compliance with government standards. The proposed legislation also includes a review clause, ensuring that the amendments in this bill are re-evaluated in 2019. There can be no doubt that the Palaszczuk government is taking a thorough and reflective approach to this monumental reform.

One of the primary objectives of the NDIS is to ensure that people with disability have the tools to participate in the wider community, both socially and economically. In preparation for this, the department of disability services has been building relationships with community organisations across Queensland. Kyabra Community Association Inc. in Runcorn has mobilised in support of the early implementation of the NDIS, holding multiple information sessions to inform locals of the changes to come and how best to prepare. Organisations such as Kyabra are the backbone of our community. They are most attuned to the needs of Queenslanders and I am glad that the government is relying on them to help implement such a wide-reaching scheme. Kyabra will be relied upon in the coming years to help people with disability find opportunities to advance their social and economic participation.

The government has also been active in preparing Queenslanders for employment in the inevitable boom to our disability services sector. The minister's office has launched the NDIS NGO Workforce Strategy, which will deliver up to 1,043 jobs in Brisbane's south alone. This is big news for my electorate, which has many young people who are eager and willing to work. This strategy will ensure that they are trained up and prepared to offer quality support to people living with disability.

As I said, it is my belief, and that of this government, that people with disability deserve access to everything that they need to live a quality life. The NDIS is a groundbreaking policy framework that is already a very hot topic of conversation in Queensland communities. I commend the work of this government in carefully fast-tracking the implementation of the NDIS and I support the changes proposed by this bill. I commend the bill to the House.