




Speech By
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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Disability Action Week

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (12.21 pm): I rise today to show my support for Disability Action Week 2016. As the shadow minister for disability services, it is a great privilege to raise awareness of this important week and help support people living with a disability by promoting the amazing things that they accomplish every day. Disability Action Week is currently underway and runs from 11 to 17 September, with this year's theme being 'Inclusion; it's a game changer'. The theme is aimed at helping to champion inclusion of people with disabilities in all levels of sport and also within our communities. It is no coincidence that this week's celebration aligns with the 2016 Paralympic Games happening in Rio. In Queensland at least one in five people are living with some form of disability. I do not believe there would be many Queenslanders whose lives are not touched in some way by a friend or family member who is living with a disability. It was Helen Keller who once said—

I am conscious of a soul-sense that lifts me above the narrow, cramping circumstances of my life. My physical limitations are forgotten—my world lies upward, the length and the breadth and the sweep of the heavens are mine!

Every day across Queensland people are achieving amazing feats while living with a disability. In this very chamber the member for Cairns has shown that being an elected representative in the Queensland parliament is a very real possibility for a person living with a disability. Right now half a world away in Rio hundreds of Australian athletes are proving that being a Paralympian is not out of reach.

As we talk about game changers and Disability Action Week, it would be remiss of me not to mention the disability reforms happening right now in Queensland and around Australia through the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This is a real game changer for the thousands if not millions of Australians whose lives are affected in some way by disability. The NDIS is changing and will continue to change the way people live their lives, while giving individuals more choice and more control over how they live their lives. People are now being able to self-direct the way in which they tailor support to ensure they are able to live their lives to the fullest. It has been a privilege to be able to visit service providers and talk to people and hear their stories of how the NDIS will change their lives.

I also want to put on record my support for those who work tirelessly as carers, support workers and associated roles to support people living with a disability and help them to reach their potential. I am proud to have been part of a government that took the first steps to implementing this historic reform for Queenslanders. As with all major reforms, we must not lose sight of what we are trying to achieve and we cannot stop working together to achieve this. As I have said, when it comes to support and inclusion, we do not have to look very far to see how amazing Australians are. At the 2016 Paralympics in Rio, Aussies are mixing it with the world's best and winning medals of all colours. As at the latest count, our Australian Paralympians have eclipsed the medal tally won by Olympians only a month ago. With seven gold, 13 silver and 14 bronze, our Aussie athletes are proving a sporting force on the world

stage. Our Queensland Paralympians have been working hard in the lead-up to the games. I want to make special mention of one particular Gold Coast athlete. Curtis McGrath is competing for the first time at the Rio Paralympics in canoeing. Curtis almost lost his life fighting for his country and he will once again go into battle for Australia. This courageous young man and former soldier lost his legs in a landmine explosion in Afghanistan. His courage and strength to make it to the Games is amazing and I want to express my support.

The most exciting part of this week's Disability Action Week theme is to think that in less than two years the Gold Coast will play host to many para-athletes who will be competing in front of a home crowd. This will be the first time since the Sydney Paralympics we will see such a major sporting event and I hope this week's action week theme is motivation for our many aspiring athletes.

I conclude today by acknowledging all the organisers of Disability Action Week events. I am very much looking forward to attending the post school options expo tomorrow at the Chandler complex. This is a week to celebrate and I encourage every Queenslander to get behind this week and ensure we deliver an inclusive community, not just in sport but in every facet of our lives.