




Speech By  
**Joseph Kelly**

**MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES**

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**DISABILITY SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION (WORKER SCREENING)  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (4.05 pm): I too support the Disability Services and Other Legislation (Workers Screening) Amendment Bill 2018. I would like to start by acknowledging the good work of the minister and thanking her for not only her work on this bill but also all the work she does for people with disability in this state. I would like to acknowledge the good work of the committee and the committee members. I probably will not go as far as they went in congratulating themselves, but they certainly did good work on this bill. I would like to acknowledge all those people who made a submission on the bill.

I asked for an opportunity to speak on this bill because, having worked with people with intellectual disabilities, I know just how important this bill is. Twenty years or so ago I worked as the manager of staff and volunteers who worked with people with disabilities at an organisation that was then called Q-Rapid and is now called Life Stream. Q-Rapid was an organisation that provided sport and recreational support for adults and children with intellectual disabilities. The objectives of the organisation were to empower people to the point where they could engage as independently as possible in sport and recreational activities. We had staff and volunteers who were engaged in a range of situations from being in people's homes, taking them away on trips overnight and supporting them in the community. There was a whole range of situations where you had a volunteer or staff supporting someone.

In those days we did our best to screen both our staff and volunteers, and I believe that we did a very good job because we were always driven by a very deep concern and care for the participants in our programs, but essentially we operated under our own rules. I know that managers back then—and I am sure managers these days—would welcome the national standards as an incredibly positive step forward brought about by the NDIS. The national quality and safety framework that has caused the changes which are the subject of this bill is something that everybody should welcome and support.

I have seen the positive benefits of national quality frameworks rolled out in the environment of Queensland Health. It has made a massive difference to the way we operate in healthcare settings, and I can see how that will occur too in a disability framework. Effectively, in health care now we have a lingua franca where health professionals of different types in different states and different cities, different hospitals and different environments are talking to each other about the same issues. We have the same priorities when it comes to delivering quality care to patients. These frameworks now drive our practice and, most importantly, they are delivering better outcomes for the patients in our care. I certainly believe these quality and safety frameworks in disability will have the same impact for people with disabilities.

I want to draw on the experience I gained from my time at Q-Rapid and other organisations that I have worked with or volunteered for in terms of the different levels of capacity of people with intellectual disabilities. I am really careful about generalising about people with disabilities. I worked with people who had very high needs, who had very low communication skills, who had quite significant behavioural

challenges and who needed high levels of personal care. I also worked with people who had jobs and partners, who had religious beliefs and political beliefs and who had favourite football teams—all of the things that make my life and the lives of other people in this chamber meaningful and worthwhile.

I do not want to generalise about people with disabilities or suggest that people with disabilities are automatically vulnerable and need protection. However, regardless of whether a person has a disability or not, if someone requires care from another person for a short or long period of time, they are potentially vulnerable.

Carers have huge ethical obligations to act in the interests of the people they care for, regardless of whether they are in a paid or a voluntary capacity. I am certainly pleased that I have an organisation like Carers Queensland in my electorate that supports the work of carers in our community. While I support this legislation because it provides guidance for all employers of carers who provide NDIS services, it will provide additional protections. When the service and practices are standardised, everyone knows what should be happening, and everyone can see when what should be happening is not happening. That will be a really positive thing, because all employers of people who are going to provide services in the NDIS, including those sole traders, will know just what the standards are.

The NDIS, as many have mentioned, is a huge step forward. It is also a huge experiment. I know from my studies in health economics that this is a model that has been advocated many times in many different parts of the world, but Australia is, to my knowledge, the first place that has attempted to go down this path. It certainly is something that is being watched right around the world. As someone who joined the Every Australian Counts campaign to bring this in, I am of the view that when this works it will certainly empower people with disabilities. It is important that we get this right. Everyone in our community needs to have confidence that the NDIS will provide high standards of care and services to people with disabilities. This legislation will ensure that we can all have confidence that people working with people requiring NDIS services will be properly screened and will be delivering safe and good quality care. For that reason, I commend this bill to the House.