




Speech By
Kim Richards

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

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

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (4.38 pm): I rise to make a short contribution to the debate on the Disability Services and Other Legislation (Worker Screening) Amendment Bill 2018. The NDIS means more choice and control for people with disability. It is about how they receive reasonable and necessary supports to make sure that they can live their life to the fullest. Each jurisdiction in Australia will transition to the full scheme implementation of the NDIS in accordance with individual agreements at different stages. Queensland has started this transition and it is imperative that we ensure that a robust quality and safeguard system is in place. This bill prepares Queensland for the transition to the NDIS.

We know the great hopes and aspirations of those with a disability in our communities of the success of the NDIS and the services that it will deliver. We need to ensure that we are establishing the framework that provides for the success of the NDIS and protects some of the most vulnerable in our community. We know how important it is to ensure that we have the right safeguards in place. That means making sure that service providers are providing personnel and volunteers who are best placed for the most vulnerable—people who have the right skill set to support people with a disability.

During the transition, the National Disability Insurance Agency identified that, nationally, there has been an increase in service providers under the NDIS identifying as sole traders and requesting registration to deliver services as part of the participant's plan.

With recipients of the NDIS having greater choice over service, we will continue to see a greater number of service providers enter the market and a more diversified workforce. It is for this reason that we have to make sure we have the right safeguards in place. Queensland currently has an operational worker-screening system for people working or volunteering with people with a disability, the yellow card system, and this yellow card system is broadly comparable to the working with children blue card system.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguarding Framework was agreed by the Council of Australian Governments in December 2016 and the framework will apply in Queensland following full scheme operation. Under the framework, states and territories will remain responsible for operating the worker-screening unit in accordance with the nationally agreed approach. To ensure the success of the NDIS rollout it is important that we have consistent standards across the country for workers in the field of disability and hence the necessity for this bill.

The intergovernmental agreement for nationally consistent worker screening for the NDIS has been developed. It includes obligations for jurisdictions to share expanded criminal history information to allow the fullest risk assessments to be undertaken in each jurisdiction with a close eye to detail. It is this process particularly that is at the heart of ensuring the protection of those most vulnerable receiving services under the NDIS. This information sharing is necessary to support our other states, New South Wales and South Australia, when the NDIS worker-screening operations commence in those

jurisdictions. Consultation and collaboration of all states and territories will be important in the success of the NDIS and has been part of the process in delivering this framework. The Intergovernmental Agreement on Nationally Consistent Worker Screening largely aligns with Queensland's current approach to worker screening with some changes which are supported in the context of establishing a nationally consistent system.

The Intergovernmental Agreement on Nationally Consistent Worker Screening will support portability of NDIS worker-screening checks by ensuring that once screened a worker will be able to move from state to state seamlessly and employer to employer without having to be rescreened. It will eliminate the opportunity for people to make multiple attempts to gain clearance, which provides protection for our most vulnerable by ensuring that people with adverse records in one jurisdiction cannot obtain clearance to work for services under the NDIS. We have heard some pretty terrible stories of where the wrong people working with people with a disability can have really terrible outcomes.

The framework also supports the national daily monitoring of criminal histories so that we are actually keeping track and that it is not a static document for workers in their screening and their clearance. It will also reduce barriers to information sharing across the states. The NDIS transforms the way services are accessed for people with a disability in our communities. We need to make sure that we get it right and that means making sure we have the best possible checks and balances in place for those people providing services.

There are a range of amazing service providers in the Redlands and I would like to thank them for all of the work that they do. They are tireless workers in caring for people with disability and I know that they are looking forward to embracing the opportunity the NDIS scheme will bring. I would also like to acknowledge the great work of Minister Coralee O'Rourke. She has done a fantastic job in bringing this legislation to the House. This is important legislation to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable in our community as we see the rollout of one of the most significant changes to disability services. It will assist Queenslanders to live with dignity. It is a cornerstone piece of legislation. I commend this bill to the House.