




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (3.52 pm): I rise to contribute to the Disability Services and Other Legislation (Worker Screening) Amendment Bill 2018. I support the bill, which will enable Queenslanders to participate in the national information-sharing obligations for NDIS worker screening and, secondly, clarify beyond doubt the screening requirements for sole traders operating as NDIS service providers during the transition period.

Although the full scheme operation of NDIS does not commence in Queensland until 1 July 2019, in the electorate of Gregory NDIS providers such as Yumba Bimbi Support Services and Emerald BUSHkids Queensland are already under the NDIS umbrella as a part of the transition. It is worth noting that the LNP government signed an agreement to join the NDIS in May 2013, and we did that having inherited the lowest spending per capita of any state on disability services.

Mr Nicholls: And funded it.

Mr MILLAR: We also funded it; I take that interjection from the member for Clayfield. Country Queenslanders have long held a concern that their ability to benefit from the potential of the NDIS would be constrained by the capacity of our communities to deliver a range of services required.

For instance, Yumba Bimbi—and I do declare in this House that my wife is a board member of Yumba Bimbi, a very well coordinated organisation providing essential services—is the only organisation west of the coast that provides respite accommodation for the disabled and their families across Central and Western Queensland. It began life as a community run not-for-profit organisation with great support from members of the public across Central and Western Queensland and also from Kestrel coalmine. To my mind, it was vital that Yumba Bimbi be retained under the NDIS because it is the community's organisation and to ensure the continuation of service. When it comes to western and regional Queensland we have seen other large service providers come and go.

We have observed that every time there are savings to be made, the first thing that goes is services to the bush. It is said that people can travel to Rockhampton. That seems to be the assumption. That is a minimum of seven hours for someone in Longreach. It is just not feasible. To pick up their family and travel all the way to the coast from Longreach is a big task for many families. I know families who do have to go to Rockhampton for some services and it takes three or four days. If they are living in South-East Queensland it would take them a day.

BUSHkids Queensland—and I also want to acknowledge Charlie and Kaye Wilson, who are big supporters of BUSHkids and they do a fantastic job—perhaps better known to members as the Royal Queensland Bush Children's Health Scheme, has long recognised the difficulties faced by disabled people in country Queensland and the need to deliver services to them. Their early intervention services are well received, and I have seen this firsthand when I have been there. They do a fantastic job and have a dedicated staff. The services range from speech pathology to child psychology. They receive widespread community support through the Friends of Emerald BUSHkids in Queensland. They truly do a fantastic job.

I ask any member of the House and certainly the minister to please come and visit BUSHkids in Emerald when they get a chance, just to catch up with the staff and see their dedication to doing a top job. They do it so well and it is so appreciated. Honourable members only have to see a mum and dad who need this service. Right now they are stretched because of the drought. Obviously things are not going too well in regional Queensland. To have these services and to provide those skill sets in regional Queensland is so important. Not only will this allow them some breathing space to cope with the drought and obviously the current situation in the bush; it will provide the essential services for these kids, for their children. They do such a great job.

Transport under the NDIS has emerged as an area with special challenges for rural and regional Queensland. As honourable members would understand, we do not have public transport in Central and Western Queensland like we have public transport here in Brisbane. We do rely on the caring efforts of our taxi services. I must make special mention of Cecilia and Ben Hooper from Emerald Taxis. They do a fantastic job in providing transport to get people to these services. They are a fantastic family in Central Queensland. Not only do they have a taxi service, which is a great service; they do so much for the community. They give up their time and they are pleased to do so in order to be a part of the community. I want to make special mention of Ben and Cecilia Hooper of Emerald Taxis. They do a fantastic job.

Even with such champion efforts, sole traders will be essential to delivering NDIS services across country Queensland. This bill will make it clear what screening sole traders will require to become NDIS providers. The screening is vital for the safety of NDIS users. I must ask the minister to ensure processing is carried out promptly. We had difficulties with backlogs of blue card applications at the start of the school year, which has impacted our childcare centres in the past. It also does impact our sporting groups in terms of people participating in them. There has been a backlog and we need to make sure that those blue cards are promptly processed so those people can get their blue cards very quickly and are able to participate, whether that be in providing special services such as what we are talking about here this afternoon or providing for the continuation of services such as sporting groups. It is important we get that fixed up. The tardy screening and backlogs of applications will undo the good intentions of all parties to the NDIS.

Finally, the NDIS is going to be important. It is going to be incredibly important for people in Western and Central Queensland and regional Queensland. With your indulgence, Mr Speaker, I wish to raise another issue—and it does relate to this bill. Special needs of children in regional Queensland is an issue.

I became involved because as the local member I called a special needs meeting in Emerald. I thought that only two or three people would come, but over 25 mothers turned up with children with special needs. There were a lot of tears in the room that day. One of the biggest problems is that they cannot connect to support groups in regional Queensland as quickly as you can down here on the coast or in South-East Queensland. They feel isolated and sometimes lonely. They have beautiful children who have a range of difficulties. I thank God that my children are healthy.

As the member for Gregory, I want to make sure that I get them all the support that is available. What we are doing here is important, but we also need to cater for children with special needs in regional and rural Queensland, because those kids want to live there. The families want to stay there because their families are there, but sometimes they are forced to go to the coast to access services. I call on the Labor government to look at the issue of children with special needs and provide the special things that those children need. I commend this bill to the House.