




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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DISABILITY SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION (NDIS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (11.51 am): Today, I rise to speak in support of the Disability Services and Other Legislation (NDIS) Amendment Bill 2019. With this bill Queensland is taking the next step in its transition to the full rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The NDIS is a landmark initiative in this country. It was introduced by a federal Labor government to improve the lives of people living with disabilities. The NDIS has fundamentally changed the way we fund and deliver disability services in this country and has helped people with disabilities achieve greater choice and control over their lives.

People with disabilities deserve nothing less than to live their lives independently and with dignity. They deserve nothing less than to be reassured that they will be safe in the care of others and that they will be given opportunities to achieve their goals in life. I thank the Minister for Communities and Minister for Disability Services and Seniors, Coralee O'Rourke, for introducing this bill and for the work that she and the department have done in guiding Queensland's transition to the NDIS.

This bill delivers urgent and critical legislative amendments to support the commencement of the NDIS commission in Queensland from 1 July 2019. On that date, the roles and responsibilities of the NDIA, the NDIS commission and the Queensland government will change and Queensland will become a participating jurisdiction. The NDIS commission will assume primary responsibility for overseeing registered NDIS providers while the Queensland government retains the responsibility for limited components of the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework, including oversight of worker screening, authorising the use of restrictive practices and operating a community visitor function.

The bill will also ensure that the existing quality and safeguards systems that are provided by the Queensland government outside of the NDIS are retained and applied to disability services post July 2019. It is expected that over 50,000 Queenslanders with a disability will have transitioned to the NDIS by 30 June this year. The Palaszczuk government has committed to ensuring the smooth transition to the full scheme so that Queenslanders with a disability continue to receive high-quality services.

Let us face it: the federal coalition government has made a mess of the NDIS rollout and people with disabilities are suffering. I hear it every day in my community. When I was helping to support the minister while she was on leave late last year, I attended on her behalf a number of community consultations and heard firsthand how the NDIS had been beset by massive delays, with people waiting on average for four months for their plans to be approved and some people needing assisted technology supports waiting for over a year. A Commonwealth Ombudsman report found that the NDIS participants were waiting up to nine months to have their plans reviewed owing to the fact that their approved plans were not meeting their needs. The Australian Productivity Commission recommended to the federal coalition government that the NDIA staff cap be abolished to improve service outcomes for NDIS participants, but that recommendation has been ignored.

There is a huge problem in remote areas with many Indigenous NDIS recipients missing out on full support because there is no market for NDIS services in remote communities. The shortfall in disability services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in remote areas entrenches disadvantage

and inequality. We often forget that disability is a forgotten target under closing the gap. If we want to prevent further disadvantage in Indigenous communities across Queensland it needs to be recognised as a target.

The importance of delivering disability services that are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also cannot be understated. In my electorate of Ipswich, the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health works with local health provider Kambu, which does fantastic work in providing culturally sensitive disability services to the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Ipswich.

Another concern about the NDIS is that people with disability in regional areas, in culturally and linguistically diverse communities or in low-income areas are under-utilising the NDIS plans because they struggle to access the services they need owing to a lack of available providers or a lack of appropriate services that fit their specific needs. Many of those problems have been highlighted already by the federal government's joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme but, instead of fixing these problems, in this year's federal budget Scott Morrison shamefully short-changed the NDIS by \$1.6 billion, showing that he would rather prioritise the budget bottom line than invest in the long-term needs of people with disabilities.

We have all heard horror stories from constituents who have been left stranded by poor-quality NDIS plans that do not meet their needs or who fall through the cracks owing to NDIS applications being rejected. The Queensland government is picking up the slack to make sure that people with disabilities are still able to stay connected to their communities, live independently and achieve their long-term goals. For instance, the failure of the Morrison government to transition taxi subsidies to the NDIS funding arrangement has meant that the Queensland government has had to step in—as it did recently—to provide an additional \$6 million to continue the Taxi Subsidy Scheme for Queensland NDIS recipients. One of my constituents, who is visually impaired, informed me that his NDIS transport plan was woefully inadequate, providing only \$61.46 a fortnight. Without the additional top-up of Queensland's Taxi Subsidy Scheme, this constituent would struggle getting his son to school every day as he would be able to manage only three or four return trips before the NDIS transport allowance ran out.

Ipswich was one of the first regions to roll out the NDIS—on 1 July 2017—and since then I have heard many war stories from my constituents who have battled NDIS processes. For example, a mother who had a 23-year-old non-verbal daughter with autism was incredibly disheartened to find out that her daughter's new NDIS funding package had been severely slashed compared to last year's plan, even though nothing in her daughter's life or circumstances had changed. One of her daughter's goals was to increase her capacity for independent living, but that goal is now far less attainable owing to the funding cut to her package. There have also been other stories of people forced to navigate the NDIS's complex, bureaucratic system only to find out months later that their application had been rejected or that they had been issued with an extremely limited funding package that falls far short of their needs. We do not want people falling through the cracks, which is why the Queensland government will continue to champion access and inclusion for people with disabilities.

Although the commencement of the NDIS commission in Queensland from 1 July means a reduced role for the Queensland government in terms of funding disability services, the Queensland government will not give up on people in our state who are living with disability regardless of whether they are eligible for NDIS funding. Our government will continue delivering state disability services, including support services for clients ineligible for the NDIS and services to address the increased workloads related to the NDIS rollout. We will also deliver services to ensure that Queenslanders can still access critical supports whilst shortcomings between NDIS and mainstream services are sorted out. While the coalition government has short-changed the NDIS, the Palaszczuk government will put people with disabilities first and will fight on their behalf so that they can access the services they need.

Queensland has one of the strongest quality and safeguards frameworks in Australia for people with disabilities. This bill both maintains and strengthens those safeguards to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable members of our community. Strong safeguards will be retained for the authorisation of restrictive practices in Queensland. Our worker screening system will be strengthened by extending the range of offences disqualifying people from working in the disability services sector. The jurisdiction for our community visitor program and coronial jurisdiction—

(Time expired)