




Speech By
Samuel O'Connor

MEMBER FOR BONNEY

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DISABILITY SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION (NDIS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (4.39 pm): I rise to support the Disability Services and Other Legislation (NDIS) Amendment Bill. This bill makes sure Queensland has put in place all the urgent and critical amendments needed to support the commencement of the operation of the NDIS commission from 1 July 2019. It is the sensible and necessary step in Queensland's transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

I believe that all members of this House would agree that Queenslanders living with disabilities, and of course their carers, are some of the most resilient people in our state. They go through challenges many of us could not imagine, and they contribute to Queensland in unique and substantive ways. The rollout of the NDIS is complex and has not always been perfect, but this legislation is a step towards ensuring Queenslanders have the access they need to this important scheme.

I would like to take the chance to highlight some of the programs caring for those under the NDIS on the Gold Coast. I have had the privilege of meeting just some of these very special constituents of mine and hearing their stories. In April I visited Specialcise at Average Kane's Personal Training, a small gym at the back of Southport named with a fantastic reference to the great film *DodgeBall*. Specialcise is a unique workout program for kids with special needs. Maree, the founder, used to go to her personal training sessions with her daughter, Grace. Grace has Down syndrome and she would sit and watch from the side but that was never enough for Grace. She wanted to get involved herself. It was from this that Maree created Specialcise, a specific program designed to give kids with disabilities the chance to exercise, to interact with each other and to have fun while they are doing it. I believe there are now eight personal trainers operating across the Gold Coast with this program. Like many others, it is NDIS approved. It means parents who have never been able to afford something like this can give it a go.

Another huge issue for people in my area with a disability is transport. I am proud to represent some of the very special drivers who go above and beyond. One of them is Antone Saunders, better known as Colonel. He spends his days driving kids to and from our state's second largest special school at Southport. Apparently, he also plays cricket but I am yet to see evidence of that. I ran into him at the Arundel Tavern, and over a few beers he ran me through some of their issues and invited me along on one of his morning school runs with Metro Coach, which is based in my electorate off Ereton Drive in Arundel. The service they provide gives much needed support and access for students and their parents. It cuts down on the costs of taxis, provides a tailored and personal approach for the kids and is well suited to ensure that these children get to school in an easy and enjoyable way. It is a very important point with the taxis, because Southport Special School has some serious access issues so the fewer vehicles getting in and out the better.

I rode along in the bus with Colonel and Paula and I saw the difference they made with their very special passengers and it really opened my eyes. They knew the kids, they knew what they needed, they knew what they liked, they knew what made them smile and laugh. It was quite a long bus run going all the way up to Pimpama and Upper Coomera, because Southport is the only special school on

that part of the coast all the way up to Beenleigh. It took us three laps to get into the driveway of the school actually, which is further evidence of the need to improve that section of Kumbari Avenue near Smith Street, the Southport Special School and Musgrave Hill State School.

Another great Gold Coast program I would like to bring to the attention of the House is Headway ABI, which my electorate officer, Joe Wilkinson, actually sits on the board of. When I visited this program, I met Scott, a clinical exercise physiologist who helps people with acquired brain injuries and also happens to live in the great suburb of Biggera Waters. He knows what his patients go through probably more than any other health worker they have been treated by because when he was just 17 he suffered three strokes after finding out he had a brain tumour. The whole left side of his body was left paralysed. Scott left hospital after six months and he still could not swallow. He could talk slowly and walk up to about 100 metres, but he had to learn how to do all of those basic things again, undergoing rehabilitation every day for seven years. The experience made him want to go to university himself and to learn how to help others get a better quality of life. Headway ABI is another NDIS approved program which has found an important area for care.

Lastly, I would like to say thank you to those opposite for listening to the concerns of many Queenslanders—which were highlighted by I think 13 disability groups and the Liberal National Party—with their decision to not axe the Taxi Subsidy Scheme. I was approached by a number of constituents who rely on taxis to get to appointments and for crucial contact with their family and friends. The fear in some of them for what they would have lost, their subsequent isolation and their loneliness was very raw. The scheme helps over 10,000 Queenslanders and I commend the government for seeing sense and reversing their initial heartless decision to cut the program.

As I said, our Queenslanders living with disabilities are a tough breed. They deserve every bit of support we can manage, and this bill ensures Queensland is ready to support the rollout of the NDIS from 1 July. I commend the bill to the House. In closing, I would like to wish my local federal MP, Stuart Robert, all the best as he becomes the Minister for the NDIS. He will be held to account by a name that we used to hear very often in this place, Bill Shorten. All the best to Stu. I know he will do an outstanding job as Minister for the NDIS.