




Speech By
Stephen Andrew

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

Record of Proceedings, 12 May 2022

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (3.37 pm): I would like to thank all the nurses across the state. I would like to see the ones who have lost their jobs through mandates reinstated as soon as possible.

I rise to speak on the Health and Environment Committee's report on the inquiry into the provision of primary, allied and private healthcare, aged-care and NDIS services and its impact on the Queensland public health system. I submitted a statement of reservation outlining some of the concerns I had with the report, mainly to do with some of the recommendations that the report sets out and were adopted largely on the advice to the committee given by health officials within the department and other health stakeholder groups. Expert opinion on the Queensland healthcare industry uniformly adopted the position that the current consumer centred and fee based system is broken and beyond repair.

The advice we were given was that the whole thing should be scrapped and replaced with a new model based on the same principles underpinning the NDIS system. While I acknowledge that the old system does have flaws, I feel many of them are due to the system being starved of appropriate levels of funding and resources rather than that they are no longer fit-for-purpose.

I am also not a fan of the NDIS model, which is one that was advanced as a way forward for health care in Queensland. The idea behind the NDIS was to overhaul the welfare system which has supported those born with disabilities for decades. The planners of the scheme said it would boost productivity and allow hundreds of thousands of family members to return to the workforce. The man who came up with the scheme was a former treasury official and investment banker. That should tell people something about the whole situation. In those early stages people were being told that there would still be supports available for people with a disability who were not eligible for the scheme. However, today it has become very clear that there are almost no supports available for these people.

I have spoken to many who say that the NDIS is completely unresponsive to their situation and needs. Many of them are receiving messages from the scheme advising of significant cuts to their plans which are all in complete opposition to what their doctors are recommending for them. Over time, the scheme's local area coordinator role has transitioned from helping people access mainstream services to being deeply complicit in designing the individual's NDIS plans. This has had a huge negative effect, essentially transforming the coordinator's role from one that is supportive to one that is driven by efficiency gains and cold, hard metrics.

The second effect is that the whole planning process has had a focus on specialist disability services, including for profits, rather than community support participation. Those who do not tick the boxes for social impact bonds or impact investment are finding their plans cut back arbitrarily after a brief assessment process by cold technocrats armed with a clipboard and a pen. Those who do not tick the boxes are falling through the cracks. The cracks are getting bigger by the day. Overall, we are seeing a massive breakdown in trust between the NDIS and the disability community.

In my region we have many people on the NDIS, and I am hearing some outright horror stories about what is going on. I put a video up just the other day. I speak to Ray Wegner all the time. He is a lovely bloke. His treatment at the hands of the NDIS has been nothing short of disgraceful. Under the previous system, Ray was given a 24/7 level of care due to his profound disabilities. He requires around-the-clock care with everything, including cooking, cleaning, washing, dressing, bathing and even toileting. He is in a wheelchair and has significant speech disabilities. This requires a carer to go with him every time he leaves his home. Ray is therefore one of those so-called consumers who does not fit into any of the boxes and from whom the scheme fund managers and impact investors cannot make any money. He has had drastic cuts made to his care, and the mental distress this is causing the man is heartbreaking. When I see him on his own running up the street I wave to him and stop to say hello. He has repeatedly asked to be put back on his old funding plan and level of assistance, but his appeals for help are ignored. They simply are not listening.

Sadly, Ray is far from being alone. I know that many other people in the regions are struggling to get the help they need. According to the committee's report, the current consumer focused fee-for-service model is outmoded and should be scrapped. That may be, but what they are planning to replace it with is going to be much worse. We only have to ask Ray. It is a sad indictment going forward. We need both state and federal governments to come up with a proper plan to satisfy the needs of rural communities and the disabled in our state.