



Speech By  
**Rob Molhoek**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT**

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## **DISABILITY SERVICES AND OTHER LEGISLATION (NDIS) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (3.33 pm): I rise to put on the record my support for this legislation before the House, the Disability Services and Other Legislation (NDIS) Amendment Bill. It has been a long time coming. The dialogue for the NDIS began almost a decade ago in principle, but it was not until May 2013 when the states started negotiations with the federal government. There was a lot of apprehension about the change. There were a lot of very nervous families and a lot of concern about what this was going to mean. It is important to state that it has been a very challenging process for many hundreds of community service organisations and providers across the nation—certainly across Queensland—as they have sought to come to terms with the changes and as they have sought to continue providing quality services to some of Queensland’s most vulnerable people.

In May 2013 when the LNP signed the agreement with the Gillard government I was fortunate to be the assistant minister to Tracy Davis, the then minister for communities, and on many occasions we would travel together to visit some of the service providers around the state. I have nothing but admiration and deep respect for the many volunteers and individuals who work with vulnerable Queenslanders every day of the week because I have seen firsthand how taxing it is, how challenging it can be and, dare I say it, at times how heartbreaking it can be.

I note that throughout the committee process a number of stakeholder views were sought. Queensland Advocacy Inc., QAI, Queenslanders with Disability Network and People with Disability Australia all raised concerns particularly around state-specific restrictive practices, and with some justification. The concern that these organisations expressed was a deep, heartfelt concern that restrictive practices were not used inappropriately.

While on that subject, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the great work of Vicki Batten whose organisation was, sadly, a victim of the NDIS to some extent and probably a victim of overcaring. For almost a decade Vicki Batten was the chief executive officer of FSG, Family Services Group, on the Gold Coast which unfortunately did not make it to the NDIS and faced significant financial challenges and collapsed as a result of them. It was Vicki Batten who pulled me aside four or five years ago when we were first considering the revised disability services bill and the NDIS just to talk from the heart about some of the challenges of dealing with vulnerable Queenslanders. She spoke very proudly about her organisation’s commitment and the commitment of her staff to use restrictive practices as an absolute last resort.

While I understand that the bill currently seeks to uphold the current provisions within Queensland legislation, I note that some of the organisations that presented their views had requested that perhaps there needed to be a more specific national regime and perhaps that is something that will be looked at in the fullness of time. The key issue here is having a consistent framework for those practices and a framework that is not overused, but at the same time I think we all understand that there are certain individuals who do require medication or, sadly, more extreme forms of restraint in fairly challenging circumstances.

I guess that is why the notes to the legislation recommend that the provisions relating to the granting of yellow cards be carried forward from the act to comply in respect of the national framework. That is important. Just like the blue card system is incredibly important, it is critical that those public servants and those people within the police force and other areas of our Public Service who are charged with the responsibility of granting these cards do have the framework that they need to make good decisions and that there are very clear guidelines put in place as to who should and should not receive a yellow card, so I certainly commend the need for this to be dealt with in the context of this legislation.

I want to put on the record that the LNP is not opposing this legislation. Although the LNP has been very frustrated with the transition to the NDIS and some of the unnecessary disruptions or concerns that have been created for people in Queensland, it believes that this bill is a sensible and necessary step forward in Queensland's transition to the NDIS.

At this point, it would be remiss of me to not mention some incredible providers within my own electorate. I particularly want to pay tribute to Cornelia Babbage, the head of Multicultural Families Gold Coast, who last weekend put on an excellent Queensland Day celebration in the Broadwater Parklands. It was great to be there. It was an inclusive day, not just in terms of Queenslanders generally but it was great to see so many people with disability there, to see their carers out with them, to see the smiles on their faces and to see people really enjoy a classic Gold Coast day in the Broadwater Parklands. I take my hat off to Cornelia and her organisation, because they do great work. They are very passionate. It was great to see Cornelia recognised recently with a citizenship award from the local community.

There are a great many other organisations in my electorate that have had very humble beginnings. Able Australia is a not-for-profit provider that is located at Sykes Court, which is just off Smith Street, in the heart of Southport. This organisation started many years ago when a couple of very kind-hearted people cobbled together the money for a bus to provide transport for people with disability and to also transport cancer patients to Brisbane for treatment. At the time, I was privileged to be on the Gold Coast community fund board, which was able to provide them funding in the form of petrol payments to help support them. That was more than 10 or 15 years ago. Today, Able Australia is a significant provider of services to people with a disability the length and breadth of the Gold Coast.

My office did a bit of research because we thought it would be good to find out how many approved NDIS providers there were in my electorate. When we got to about 80 we stopped, because we thought that we would be doing that all day. It was incredible to realise how many people are affected by disability and how many volunteers and workers are engaged in providing services to people on a day-to-day basis. That research highlights why this legislation is so important and why these transitional provisions need to be put in place.

Finally, I want to mention a guy who I met about five years ago who has incredible passion—Professor Harry McConnell. He is a director of the Institute for the Clinical Advancement of Neuroplasticity. Harry is the Clinical Subdean and Professor of Neuropsychiatry and Neurodisability at the Griffith University School of Medicine and the Gold Coast University Hospital. Harry is one of those really passionate individuals who cares about people. He is so excited about the NDIS finally coming into place because it means that his organisation gets to start round 1 of the centre of excellence in neurodiversity on the Gold Coast in the games village complex.