




Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Record of Proceedings, 5 September 2018

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

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (3.16 pm): I rise as the shadow minister for communities, disability services and seniors to address the Disability Services and Other Legislation (Worker Screening) Amendment Bill 2018 introduced into the Queensland parliament on 20 March this year by the Minister for Communities and Minister for Disability Services and Seniors, the Hon. Coralee O'Rourke. The content of this bill was considered by the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee. This parliamentary committee tabled its report on 8 May 2018. The committee recommended that the bill be passed.

As outlined in the explanatory notes, the objectives of the Disability Services and Other Legislation (Worker Screening) Amendment Bill 2018 are to amend the Police Service Administration Act 1990 to enable Queensland to participate in national information-sharing obligations for the National Disability Insurance Scheme worker-screening requirements under the National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguarding Framework and the Intergovernmental Agreement on Nationally Consistent Worker Screening as it relates to the National Disability Insurance Scheme; and the Disability Services Act 2006 to clarify beyond doubt the screening requirements for sole traders during the transition period until full implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in Queensland.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguarding Framework was agreed to by COAG on 9 December 2016. The Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee was advised by departmental officers that the development of this bill was built upon the consultation already undertaken by the Commonwealth in relation to the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework. Broader consultation was therefore not undertaken and submitters to the committee's inquiry into the bill raised no concerns about the consultation process.

Stakeholder submissions to this bill included Queensland Advocacy Inc., which supported the amendments and agreed to a nationally consistent approach, and the Queensland Family and Child Commission, which supported the changes and referred to its blue card review from September 2017 and recommendations in relation to information sharing for the purposes of assessing and managing risks of harm to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission stipulated that information sharing between working with children checks and NDIS worker screening would provide for consistent government decision-making. It should be noted that this bill does not amend the working with children legislation. The Queensland Family and Child Commission simply raised this to alert the government to their blue card report and issues they experienced in relation to information sharing.

Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia also provided a submission with a view to supporting a nationally consistent approach. They also asked the committee to consider legislation in relation to cross-sector workforce screening with aged-care providers, but this was outside the scope of the inquiry.

It is worth noting that in May 2013 the then Liberal National Party government signed an intergovernmental agreement with the then federal Gillard government to implement the NDIS here in Queensland. The Liberal National Party supported the disability services sector in Queensland when in government, and we will continue to do so again while in opposition.

The state LNP also at the time announced an \$868 million commitment as part of the NDIS implementation. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is a major national initiative and it has come a long way, in part, from our commitment to it in its early stages of development. The NDIS has progressed in the five years since we, the LNP, agreed to implement the National Disability Insurance Scheme here in Queensland.

Each jurisdiction in Australia transitions to the full scheme implementation of the NDIS in accordance with individual bilateral agreements and at different stages. The full scheme operation of the NDIS does not commence in Queensland until 1 July 2019, but the legislative amendments contained in this bill are required during the transition to enable Queensland to meet its information-sharing obligations for worker screening as other jurisdictions, such as New South Wales and South Australia, commence full scheme implementation and the operation of their NDIS worker-screening systems.

All jurisdictions have agreed under the framework to share this expanded range of information and are considering any necessary legislative amendments required in each jurisdiction to give effect to this agreement. This is a truly national effort to give participants choice and control of their disability support packages, and the measures within this bill will help to ensure that there are consistent safeguards nationwide under this scheme. The Liberal National Party has a strong record of backing the Queensland disability support sector, and we plan to continue this record by working for a smooth transition for NDIS participants going into July 2019.

I would also like to take this opportunity to again acknowledge and mention that in my electorate of Moggill we are privileged to have the Help Enterprises McIntyre Centre Riding for Disabled. The McIntyre Centre, established in 1964, was, and still is today, a pioneering organisation. Thousands of young people have been positively impacted by having horseriding included as part of their everyday lives. The McIntyre Centre has been achieving life-changing educational and therapeutic outcomes for over 50 years.

In my role as the shadow minister it is my responsibility to hold the minister to account and to only oppose bills that will be detrimental to Queenslanders. It is not, however, my role to oppose legislation that will have a positive impact on the disability sector in Queensland. This legislation is vitally important in that it will allow Queensland to fully participate in the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This bill makes necessary legislative changes, and my colleagues on this side of the House will not oppose it here today.

I note that the expanded range of criminal history information to be shared for disability support worker screening is the same as what is currently in place for working with children checks. The information being screened is nothing controversial or new. It is only now aiming to be applied to the NDIS in much the same way that blue cards are obtained by people working with children.

The proposed legislation will continue the rollout of the NDIS that started in 2013 under the LNP, and it is a bill that is in the best interests of Queenslanders. This bill will allow Queensland to take the next step towards having a fully transitioned NDIS. This bill makes necessary changes and, as such, the bill is supported and will not be opposed by this side of the chamber.

Finally, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the federal member for Ryan, Jane Prentice MP, and her service as the federal assistant minister for social services and disability services. I know there are many disability service providers in Queensland that have valued Jane Prentice's strong and dedicated commitment to this sector. I join with them in recognising her contribution over a number of years in her former ministerial position.