



The Coalition's Policy for Disability and Carers

August 2013

Key Points

The Coalition understands that Australians with disability need more support.

At present, the level of support a person with a disability receives can depend on: what State they live in, whether the disability is congenital or was acquired and, if acquired, whether it was in the workplace, a motor vehicle accident or some other context.

Worker's compensation and motor vehicle accident insurance provides coverage for some people in some States. But if you are born with a disability or acquire a disability later in life it can be a different story – waiting lists and rationing. The result is that many people with a disability are left without the assistance they need.

The Coalition understands that we need a new, individually tailored system of support based on need with the entitlement for support going to the individual.

This is the vision behind the Productivity Commission's landmark report into long-term care and support for people with disability and the vision behind the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The Federal Coalition, for its part, has enthusiastically supported each milestone on the road to the NDIS that has reflected the work of the Productivity Commission.

We supported the eight launch sites, we welcomed the agreements between the Commonwealth and States and Territories for full jurisdiction-wide roll out and we supported the *NDIS Act* passed in March.

A Coalition government will deliver the NDIS.

The Coalition also understands the critical role of carers.

We will preserve income support for carers and provide additional support to carers through the establishment of a young carer bursary scheme.

The Coalition will also establish an industry advisory council for the disability and carer sector. The council will be co-chaired by a respected industry expert and by the Minister for Disabilities and Carers.



Introduction

There are more than four million Australians with one or more intellectual, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairments or psychiatric conditions and over 2.6 million carers.

The level of support a person with a disability currently receives depends on a number of factors, including: what State they live in, whether the disability is congenital or acquired and, if acquired, whether it was in the workplace, a motor vehicle accident or through other circumstance. The patchwork of schemes leaves many without proper support.

The Productivity Commission's *Disability Care and Support* report confirmed that the current system of support for people with disability needs big change.

Despite being a wealthy, first world country, people in Australia wait too long for wheelchairs and other aids and equipment. They wait for supported accommodation and respite. They wait for daily personal attendant care. Ageing parent carers worry about who will look after their adult son or daughter after they have passed away.

There is a level of support that families seek for any relative with a disability, but most families can't realistically provide it without some assistance. Without help, the pressure of providing care can crush families and break marriages.

The NDIS is a big reform.

Rather than assistance being determined by how a disability was acquired, it will be determined by need. Rather than services being rationed and delivered by officials, individuals will take control, choosing service providers that best meet their personal needs.

The Leader of the Opposition, the Hon Tony Abbott MHR, has demonstrated his personal commitment to Australians with disability by raising over \$1.2 million through the 2012 and 2013 Pollie Pedal charity bike rides for Carers Australia. Both years, along the 1,000 kilometre routes, he has met with people with disability, carers and disability organisations. The next Pollie Pedal will also partner with and raise funds for Carers Australia.

The Coalition will ensure the NDIS becomes a reality.



The Plan

1. Deliver the National Disability Insurance Scheme

The Australian Parliament has a shared commitment to provide a better deal for Australians with disability. The Federal Coalition has enthusiastically supported each milestone on the road to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). In the words of the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon Tony Abbott MHR, “the NDIS is an idea whose time has come.”

The NDIS will provide the certainty of necessary support for people with disability and their carers. It will increase the quantity and quality of disability services. It will improve employment participation for people with disability and their carers. It will also help reduce red tape across the sector.

The Coalition is committed to delivering the NDIS in keeping with the Productivity Commission’s vision and the timetable detailed by the intergovernmental agreements between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories.

The Coalition will maintain announced funding for the NDIS.

We will honour Commonwealth agreements with New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory for launch sites. The Coalition will honour the Commonwealth agreements for the full state-wide roll out with all the States and Territories.

The Productivity Commission proposed a progressive roll out for an NDIS between 2014-15 and 2018-19, starting with regional launch sites. Labor has instead decided to commence launch sites a year earlier in 2013-14 and to complete the scheme a year later in 2019-20. The Coalition will retain this timeline.

The best guarantee for the NDIS in the long-term is proper management of the Budget and the economy by a government that can live within its means. Economic policy and social policy are not alternatives. Good economic policy is necessary to support good social policy.



2. The Joint Parliamentary Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

The NDIS is a once-in-a-generation reform that will unfold over the life of several parliaments and should be the property of the Parliament as a whole, on behalf of the Australian people, rather than that of any particular political party.

The Coalition welcomed the Government's change of heart in June 2013 to establish a joint parliamentary oversight committee.

Full implementation of the NDIS will require cross party support over three parliaments.

The establishment of a Joint Parliamentary Committee on the NDIS is a welcome development.

But the Committee's terms of reference and the timeframe it will cover are more limited than the Coalition desired. The Coalition will seek to broaden the scope of the Committee and its operation to at least cover the full implementation period to 2019-20.

The Coalition envisages the Committee having a role in examining the experience in the launch sites, including eligibility issues, before progressing to full roll out.

Australians with disability don't want to be objects of care. They want to be supported, independent, in charge and in control of their lives. That's why the Coalition will revert to the term 'NDIS' rather than DisabilityCare Australia.

It's important that the name is embraced by the people the scheme is designed to support.

3. Basing the National Disability Insurance Scheme Headquarters in Geelong

The Coalition welcomes the establishment of the NDIS headquarters in Geelong.

We support it and we will keep it in Geelong.

The Barwon region is an NDIS launch site and the headquarters is supported by the State and local government.

The decision to base the NDIS headquarters in Geelong is an important and sensible one that will benefit the regional economy. The Barwon region is also an NDIS launch site and the Transport Accident Commission is based in Geelong.



4. Reduce Red Tape for the Disability Sector

The Productivity Commission characterised the current system of disability support as a “maze.”

People with disability, their carers and families often have to deal with a myriad of government departments and eligibility requirements. People with disability often have to prove their disability to each agency with which they deal.

The Coalition’s commitment to the NDIS will reduce the day-to-day administrative burden that people with disability and their carers face in getting the support they need. The NDIS will serve as a one-stop-shop.

However, the prospect of an NDIS in a few years’ time is not an excuse to do nothing in the meantime.

The Coalition would take immediate action, such as eliminating the new and unnecessary red tape and reporting requirements hampering Australian Disability Enterprises.

5. Disability Employment

The Coalition will improve accountability and transparency in the delivery of disability services.

We will place all government programmes relating to the employment of people with disability under the responsibility of a single minister.

At present, disability employment is split between two portfolios: Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA) and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). This creates unnecessary duplication and complexity, blurs accountability lines and makes it more difficult for people with disabilities to access the services they need.

Under a Coalition government, all employment issues for people with disability will be the responsibility of one minister.

The Coalition will put all policy and programmes for employment of people with disability under the Minister for Disabilities and Carers.



6. Preserve Income Support for Carers

The Coalition will maintain income support for carers.

We will maintain the Carers Payment, Carer Allowance and Carer Supplement. These programmes provide important income support to people who, because of the demands of their caring role, are unable to support themselves through substantial workforce participation.

The Coalition has a proven track record of support for carers.

The Howard Government introduced a range of payments to support carers, such as the Carer Payment, Carer Allowance and the Carer Bonus.

By comparison, Labor attempted to scrap the Carer Bonus in 2008. This would have denied crucial help to those who care for people with disability. The Coalition successfully opposed Labor's attempt to abolish it, and the Government has since re-badged it as the Carer Supplement.

The Coalition will unequivocally maintain the Carer Payment, Carer Allowance and Carer Supplement.

7. Greater Industry Advice and Consultation

The Coalition will establish an industry advisory council for the disability and carer sector.

The council will be co-chaired by a respected industry expert and by the Minister for Disabilities and Carers.

The advisory council will provide advice and recommendations on proposed legislation or policies affecting the disability and carer sector. It will convene at least once every six months and the Minister will be required to attend at least two of the council's meetings each year.

The Coalition is committed to informed, consultative decision-making. We will be a government that stands by our decisions – there will be no surprises and no broken promises.



8. Young Carer Bursary Programme

The Coalition will make an initial commitment of \$3 million over three years to provide annual bursaries for young carers.

It is estimated that 360,000 Australians between the ages of 15 and 25 years of age are carers. There are also many carers under the age of 15 years.

When studying, caring for a family member and working part time to pay for their studies, something has to give. Too often it is study. Many of these young carers are missing chances to further their education.

To assist young carers continue their study, and reduce the pressure on them to further cut into their study time with part-time work, the Coalition will introduce a Young Carer Bursary Programme.

150 annual bursaries valued up to \$10,000 will be awarded to young carers aged 25 years or under, on a needs basis, up to a cap of \$1 million per year.

The Choice

The Rudd-Gillard Government has spectacularly failed to live within its means. It has driven the Budget into debt and deficit. If left unchecked, this would compromise the ability of government to improve support for Australians with a disability and their carers, and assist volunteers.

The best guarantee for the NDIS in the long-term is proper management of the Budget and the economy by a government that can live within its means. Economic policy and social policy are not alternatives. Good economic policy is necessary to support good social policy.

Even with good ideas, Labor finds ways to waste money. The Government has wasted \$22 million, mostly on NDIS television advertising, that contains a slogan, a reference to a website and no eligibility details. In the meantime Australians with disability have been frustrated by the lack of detailed information about NDIS eligibility.

That \$22 million is also being used to rebrand the NDIS as DisabilityCare Australia – a name that is deeply disliked and seen as patronising by many people with disabilities and the organisations that support them.



Australians with disability don't want to be objects of care. They want to be supported, independent, in charge and in control of their lives. That's why the Coalition will revert to the term 'NDIS' rather than DisabilityCare Australia.

Labor also attempted to scrap the Coalition's Carer Bonus in 2008, which would have denied crucial help to those who care for people with disability. Labor only backed down after the public outcry and pressure from the Coalition. Labor has also failed the charitable, not-for-profit and voluntary sectors more broadly. It has increased their operating costs through the carbon tax while providing no compensation. The choice for these organisations has been to increase fundraising in an already difficult environment or to cut services.

A Coalition government will live within its means. The Coalition is determined to restore the nation's finances, return the Budget to surplus and pay down Labor's debt. It's a problem not of our making, but one we are determined to fix. This will enable the Coalition to improve support for Australians who face additional challenges and for those who support them.

Cost

The Coalition's *Policy for Disability and Carers* will invest \$3 million for the establishment of a young carers bursary scheme.





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For further details of the Coalition's Plan go to
www.realsolutions.org.au