

# People with Disabilities

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## AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ACTION PLAN PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES DISABILITY

### THE HUMAN FACE OF UNMET NEED Case Study 1

*B. is 24 years old, has a severe intellectual disability and has developed serious self injurious behaviour. His parents are both 69 years of age and are no longer able to provide care for B. They have been desperately seeking support. There are currently no long term accommodation options available to B. and he has been forced to live in a respite facility – intended to provide short term care only - for over 20 months (nearly 2 years). This has proved disastrous for B. and his self-injuring behaviour has continued. B. has a detached retina in one eye and glaucoma in other, and if the current situation continues he will soon be totally blind.*

**Council for  
Intellectual Disability**

*People with disabilities are stuck with services that are inefficient, dysfunctional and in many cases incapable of meeting their needs and carers are exhausted by the demands placed on them. Chronic under funding of disability services by all levels of government has delivered a state of crisis in all areas, including accommodation, long term care and support.*

*People with disability overwhelmingly want to be fully functioning, productive members of their communities, in whatever way they are capable, but barriers to their full participation, punitive government systems and a lack of support too often stop them from taking up opportunities.*

## Our Action Plan

- Develop a **National Disability Strategy**
- Substantially increase funding to meet unmet need in **supported accommodation, respite and personal attendant services**, using a population-based benchmark funding approach
- Strengthen and reframe the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA) as a national agreement based on a human rights approach, with improved transparency and accountability, increased funding and an equitable indexation rate
- Implement a **National Equipment Strategy** including increase subsidies for disability related equipment and improve tax treatment of aids, devices, appliances and equipment for people with disability
- Ratify and incorporate into law the UN Convention on the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities**
- Introduce a national **no fault insurance** scheme for catastrophic injury
- Finalise and adopt the **access** to premises standard
- Fund annual comprehensive **health checks** for all Australians with a long term disability and greater expertise in the medical profession in dealing with people with disabilities, particularly those with mental illness and intellectual disability
- Expand the COAG **Young People In Nursing Homes (YPINH)** programme to enable all YPINH in nursing homes to have a choice about where they live and how they are supported and prevent young Australians with high and complex support needs entering residential aged care settings in the future

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- Fund a national **community awareness** campaign and significantly increase support for individual and systemic disability advocacy and support services
- Introduce a **National Disability Employment Strategy**
- Restore the Disability Support Pension eligibility to pre-2006 criteria and **remove the harsh penalties** and assessment and participation requirements, which do not take into account health needs, from the Welfare to Work Act
- Increase the number of places in the **Disability Employment Network** for people on the Disability Support Pension who do not have mutual obligation requirements
- Increase investment in programmes that support employers to take on people with disabilities and reduce workplace barriers and encourage flexible working arrangements that can accommodate the needs of people with disabilities
- Introduce strong incentives to take up **full time work** via reforming the tax system, judicious use of direct cash incentives etc that will give people more money for their efforts.

## The Issues

People with disabilities are some of the most disadvantaged in our community but governments at all levels have failed to deliver. There are hundreds of thousands of Australians who don't have the services they need.

The Senate Community Affairs Committee inquiry into the funding and operation of the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA) found that there is an urgent need for all governments to put more funding into services in recognition of the significant level of unmet needs.

Having the right equipment is vital to maintenance of health and well being for people with disabilities. Yet access to much needed equipment is unacceptably limited because equipment subsidies are chronically under funded.

The funding and resources for the COAG YPINH programme is not enough to offer alternative accommodation and support arrangements to all 6,500 young Australians currently living in aged care nursing homes. Nor does it have the capacity to fully prevent young people with high and complex support needs entering residential aged care facilities in the future

The Welfare to Work legislation is an immoral and dishonest attack on some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Whilst some people may make the move from welfare into the work force, it disadvantages and discourages others who attempt to make the shift by placing them on a lower payment with fewer benefits and subjecting them to Centrelink's harsh and onerous breaching regime while they look for work if they fail.

The Australian Democrats recognise the valuable role carers play in the life of people with disabilities, and that in order to fulfil that role, carers also need to be well supported. See the *Carer Action Plan* for further information.



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