

THE TURNBULL COALITION TEAM

CCHQ 2016



27 June 2016

Ms Therese Sands
Co-Chief Executive Officer
People with Disability Australia
PO Box 666
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

Dear Ms Sands

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Coalition on important issues facing your members. On behalf of the Coalition Members of Parliament and candidates I am pleased to respond to your survey.

Australia's future depends on how well we can continue to grow and shape our economy.

Only the Liberal and National Parties have an **economic plan** to do that and ensure Australia's future.

We have a clear plan to transition the economy from the mining and investment boom to a stronger and more diverse economy.

The key elements of our national economic plan for jobs and growth are:

- An Innovation and Science programme bringing Australian ideas to market. This means greater investment and more jobs and opportunities for our young people;
- A New Defence Industry plan that will secure an advanced defence manufacturing industry in Australia. This will create thousands of new hi-tech, higher paying jobs;
- Export Trade Deals that will generate more than 19,000 new export opportunities. These will create many more jobs for our urban and regional families;
- New Tax Incentives, which will include tax cuts for more small businesses. More than two million businesses can benefit, to deliver more growth and jobs; and
- A Strong New Economy with more than 200,000 jobs expected to be created.

Our national economic plan and management is already paying dividends. Last year our economy continued to grow creating almost 300,000 new jobs, many of them in small business.

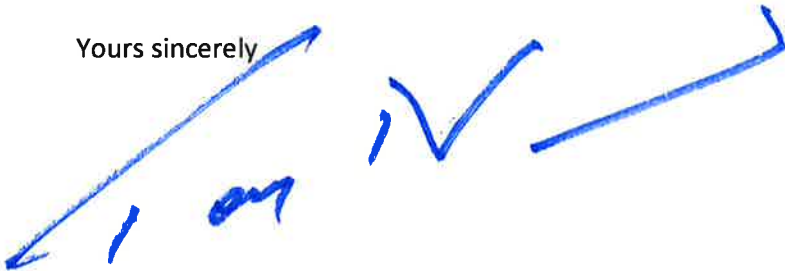
We cannot put economic growth and the jobs that come with it at risk with a return to Labor and their debt and deficits, high taxing, big spending ideas.

Only a Liberal and National Party Government can protect Australia's future.

Once announced, our policies will be available at www.liberal.org.au and www.nationals.org.au.

Thank you for communicating the Coalition's commitments to your members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tony Nutt', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tony Nutt
National Campaign Director

COALITION RESPONSE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY AUSTRALIA

The Turnbull Coalition values the significant contribution People with Disability Australia makes to support people living with a disability. The Coalition is committed to improving the lives of all Australians and providing a well-targeted and sustainable safety net for vulnerable people and families.

1. Recast the National Disability Strategy as a mechanism for change

The Turnbull Coalition strongly supports the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020.

The strategy is an important mechanism to ensure that the principles underpinning the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are incorporated into policies and programmes affecting people with disability, their families and carers. The strategy guides Government activity across the following six outcome areas:

1. Inclusive and accessible communities;
2. Rights protection, justice and legislation;
3. Economic security;
4. Personal and community support;
5. Learning and skills; and
6. Health and wellbeing.

Action taken under the strategy to improve the accessibility of mainstream services for people with disability will complement specialist disability services and programmes currently provided by Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, including those provided through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Implementation of the strategy is guided by three separate implementation plans, covering the periods 2011-2014, 2015-2018 and 2019-2020. The implementation plans are developed in partnership with State and Territory Governments.

The Coalition released the strategy's first high level progress report in December 2015. It illustrates how the strategy has driven reform in the design and delivery of mainstream services across Australia. Achievements have been made across each of the six policy outcome areas. Notable progress includes establishment of the NDIS and improved adherence to planning and regulatory systems, such as better access to buildings and public transport.

A re-elected Turnbull Coalition Government will continue to work with people with disability, their families, carers and stakeholders to ensure that the National Disability Strategy continues to drive change across Government and society to improve the lives of people with disability.

2. Engage with people with disability and their representative organisations

The Turnbull Coalition is committed to ensuring that people with disability have a voice that promotes, protects and ensures their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights, enabling full community participation.

For example, the External Merits Review - Support Component helps people with disability understand and negotiate the review process for decisions by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The Turnbull Coalition is working towards improving advocacy support more broadly and we are reviewing the National Disability Advocacy Programme. Approximately 12,000 people currently receive advocacy support through these two programmes.

Additionally, the Turnbull Government also appointed Alastair McEwin as Australia's Disability Discrimination Commissioner in the Human Rights Commission to ensure people with disability have a strong voice to represent them and their interests.

3. Fully fund the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

The Turnbull Coalition is fully committed to implementing the NDIS.

This is a long-term commitment for people with disability (and their families and carers) who need lifelong support. The Coalition is committed to properly, adequately and sustainably funding the NDIS, without paying for it through further deficit borrowings or increased taxes.

Full implementation of the NDIS is an extremely complex venture and will involve roll-out from the current 25,000 people in trial sites (as at 31 March 2016) to about 460,000 people in 2019-20. It is critical to monitor and control the transition to full scheme to ensure it develops sustainably, on time and on budget.

The Turnbull Coalition Government has reached agreements for the full roll-out of the NDIS with seven States and Territories - New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory. Together these agreements provide certainty for around 90 per cent of the 460,000 Australians expected to be eligible for the NDIS.

In Western Australia, we have agreed to extend the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and WA NDIS trials for an additional year, and expand them into new locations. This will give certainty to nearly 11,000 current and future participants of the WA trials so that they can expect ongoing support. The Commonwealth and the WA Government have agreed to finalise arrangements for the full roll-out of the NDIS in WA by the end of 2016 for commencement of full transition from 1 July 2017.

The increase of 0.5 per cent to the Medicare Levy covers less than half the cost of the Commonwealth's contribution to the NDIS, and there is a significant shortfall in funding left by the former Labor Government.

To ensure the ongoing funding of the NDIS, the Turnbull Coalition has announced the establishment of the NDIS Savings Fund Special Account. Savings from across Government will be credited to the fund to meet the \$4.4 billion annual NDIS funding gap from 2019-20 that the former Labor Government left behind. This funding gap is expected to grow to over \$6 billion over the next decade. Over \$2 billion in savings were committed to the fund in the 2016-17 Budget.

4. Prioritise closing the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability

Through the Turnbull Coalition Government's chairing of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and its Disability Reform Council (DRC), the NDIA Rural and Remote Strategy was endorsed in December 2015.

The Rural and Remote strategy was developed on the basis of NDIA trial experience to date in rural and remote areas, particularly in South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, along with experience and lessons learned from existing rural and remote service delivery approaches across Australia. The strategy provides an important starting point in developing a targeted approach to the implementation of the NDIS in rural and remote communities across Australia.

As part of the implementation of the strategy, the NDIA is also developing an internal Rural and Remote Implementation Plan, which will capture the practical steps the NDIA needed to achieve the actions outlined in the strategy.

In rural and remote areas, including the Barkly region in the Northern Territory and Palm Island in Queensland, the Strategy is currently informing and guiding stakeholder engagement and service delivery activities with local communities and service providers.

A re-elected Turnbull Coalition Government will work with States and Territories to finalise a separate NDIA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy and Engagement Action Plan. This will inform the NDIA's engagement and service delivery approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The NDIA is already engaging with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers, disability specific and mainstream, to ensure that the NDIS is building on existing service footprints while fostering resourcefulness and innovation.

5. Establish a Royal Commission into violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability

The Turnbull Coalition regards violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability as abhorrent regardless of the situation, scale or location in which it occurs.

On 11 February 2015, the Senate agreed to an inquiry into violence, abuse and neglect against people with disability in institutional and residential settings, including the gender and age related dimensions, and the particular situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability. The Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee tabled its report on 25 November 2015.

The Inquiry and subsequent report shine a much needed light on this critical issue. The report, its findings and recommendations, as well as the work being done in related State-based inquiries, will play an important role in developing better ways of preventing, detecting and responding to cases of violence abuse and neglect.

A re-elected Turnbull Government will carefully consider the Inquiry's findings and recommendations. All of those who have made submissions and appeared at hearings should be assured that their contribution will ensure a brighter and safer future for people with disability.

The Commonwealth, States and Territories are currently in the process of developing a nationally consistent quality and safeguarding framework for the NDIS. The Disability Reform Council,

comprising of Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers responsible for disability, met on 4 March 2016 and agreed to the key features of a new national quality and safeguards framework for the NDIS.

At this meeting, the Council noted the Coalition Government's proposal to establish new national functions for provider quality and registration, as well as national functions for handling complaints, including investigating serious incidents, and overseeing the use of restrictive practices. Until Governments have agreed on alternative quality and safeguarding arrangements, States and Territories remain responsible for most disability services, including complaints, regulation, quality assurance and law enforcement.

The Commonwealth also funds the National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline, which can provide advice about how a complaint might be raised and resolved.

6. Establish a National Redress Scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse

The Turnbull Coalition's position is to establish a national framework of consistent principles underpinning redress schemes run by States and Territories.

The Royal Commission expressly acknowledged that its preferred option – a single national scheme – might not be achievable within a timeframe that is acceptable for survivors. Discussions with States and Territories have confirmed that a single national scheme would not be concluded sufficiently soon. Some jurisdictions have stated publicly their opposition to a single national scheme.

This issue is above party politics. On 2 May 2016, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet established a Taskforce on Redress for Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, which will continue discussions with the States and Territories over the caretaker period. Details about the formation of the Taskforce have now been provided to all jurisdictions.

7. End disability discrimination in immigration policy

The Turnbull Coalition has no plans to change the current arrangements for people with disability under the *Migration Act* or the qualifying period for migrants' access to the Disability Support Pension.

8. Guarantee equity of support for older people with disability

The decision to restrict NDIS eligibility to those aged under 65 was made by the former Labor Government, based on advice from the Productivity Commission that the NDIS should address the chronic unmet needs of people with significant non age-related disabilities. The age-related eligibility criteria of the NDIS is aligned with the Productivity Commission report on 'Disability Care and Support' which considered that the existing division of responsibilities between the disability and aged care systems would remain. The NDIS is not intended to replace the health or aged care systems.

People who are scheme participants can choose to remain in the scheme after they turn 65. The *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* makes clear that people with degenerative conditions who are under the age of 65 can enter the scheme, and stay there; as they age. When a participant passes the age of 65 they have the option of continuing to receive their supports through the NDIS or choosing the aged care system.

For people aged 65 and over who are currently receiving specialist disability services, when the NDIS rolls out in their region they will continue to receive support through a Commonwealth Continuity of Support Programme.

People aged 65 and over who are not currently receiving specialist disability services will receive support through the Aged Care system.

9. Prioritise a Jobs Plan for people with disability

The Turnbull Coalition Government funds both supported and open employment opportunities for people with disability to ensure there are opportunities for as many people as possible to participate in work, as well as a range of services targeted to support their employers.

Over the next four years, a Coalition Government will invest over \$3 billion in Disability Employment Services and associated services to provide open employment opportunities for people with disability.

The Coalition will also provide over \$650 million towards supported employment through Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) over the next three years to ensure their viability and importance in providing employment for people with severe disability.

In 2014–15, the Coalition provided 186 ADEs with \$219.3 million to deliver supported employment to nearly 21,000 people with disability in 295 outlets across Australia. This important assistance funds the type of support that individuals may require in the workplace including occupational health and safety assistance and ongoing close supervision to undertake their work tasks.

In addition to this assistance, the Coalition has provided ADEs with a \$189 million support package comprising:

- \$141 million to help ADEs transition employees from the Business Services Wage Assessment Tool (BSWAT) to new wage tools;
- \$32 million to develop and pilot a new wage assessment tool for ADEs based on productivity alone, in consultation with the sector and the Fair Work Commission; and
- \$25 million to better support job seekers with disability and employers in the open labour market and begin shaping disability employment toward a new model in 2018.

Following the Federal Court's decision in relation to the discriminatory nature of BSWAT, the Coalition set up the BSWAT Payment Scheme to provide a one-off payment to eligible intellectually impaired persons who have had their wages assessed under the BSWAT. Earlier this year, the Coalition passed legislation to increase these payments for affected employees. The Payment Scheme calculates payments at 70 per cent of alleged lost wages.

Before the Coalition's recent amendments, payments were calculated at 50 per cent. The *Business Services Wage Assessment Tool Amendment Act 2016* extends all current BSWAT Payment Scheme deadlines by 12 months, to allow further time for people with disability to register and apply for a payment. The BSWAT Payment Scheme has received more than 2,100 registrations and 700 applications since it opened in July 2015. Payments are exempt from 'income' for social security purposes to preserve eligibility for the Disability Support Pension and to prevent debts being raised against participants in the BSWAT Payment Scheme.

The Coalition firmly believes that ADEs have a critical and ongoing role in providing employment opportunities for people with disability and will continue to work with the sector to improve wage outcomes for supported employees, alongside ensuring the sustainability of Australian Disability Enterprises.

The Turnbull Government has been working with people with disability, employers and providers of Disability Employment Services to improve the disability employment system in Australia. Since April 2015, two rounds of national public consultation have been conducted, the results of which will help shape disability employment support toward a new model from 2018.

10. Guarantee a fair and equitable social welfare system

Like any Australian family or business, the Coalition Government is focused on living within our means by keeping expenses down to balance the budget and to pay down debt. The Turnbull Coalition is committed to providing a well-targeted and sustainable safety net for vulnerable people and families. We are making responsible choices in our national economic plan to support jobs and growth and boost the economy by directing spending where it is needed and most effective.

11. Invest in affordable accessible housing

The Turnbull Coalition understands the importance of affordable accessible housing for people with disability.

Housing affordability is a complex matter determined by the interaction of both housing supply and housing demand. Despite the significant investment by Governments, more needs to be done to ensure all Australians have access to stable and affordable housing. No single level of Government can act alone on this issue – it must be collaborative and there must be innovative solutions offered. We need bold, innovative and imaginative ideas to address these challenges and also address the issue of homelessness.

In 2016-17, the Commonwealth will directly contribute \$6.4 billion to improve housing outcomes by providing:

- more than \$1.3 billion to States and Territories through the National Affordable Housing Agreement for housing assistance and homelessness services;
- around \$4.4 billion in Commonwealth Rent Assistance to support more than 1.3 million individuals and families renting in the private and community housing markets;
- \$257 million in financial incentives through the National Rental Affordability Scheme for the construction and rental of dwellings for low and moderate income households; and

- \$428 million to assist Indigenous housing outcomes through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Housing.

The Coalition established the Affordable Housing Working Group (AWHG) in February 2016 to investigate ways to boost the supply of affordable rental housing through innovative finance models. The working group received 77 submissions which are currently being evaluated, with the final report, including recommendations for possible trials and next steps, expected to be provided to the Heads of Treasuries by 30 June 2016. This will canvas a range of innovative ways to increase investment in affordable housing.

In relation to specialist disability accommodation, the Turnbull Government provided \$10 million for the construction of 12 disability accommodation projects through the Specialist Disability Accommodation Initiative (SDAI) while the NDIS is implemented.

The COAG Disability Reform Council endorsed the Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Housing and Pricing Framework. The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has now finalised its benchmark pricing and payments approach to implement this framework and enable the construction of new and innovative housing for people with a disability that require specialist accommodation.

Under the NDIA's recently released SDA Decision Paper on Pricing and Payments, only newly built and existing stock dwellings with a maximum of five residents (and which meet other requirements) will ultimately be eligible for funding through a NDIS participant's plan. This pricing approach is aligned with current industry practice and supports the view that larger accommodation models which cater to more than five people are not optimal for long-term prospects and limit opportunities for inclusion.

Participants who do not require specialist housing solutions through SDA may still be eligible for support for home modifications and other supports as part of their NDIS support package if deemed reasonable and necessary.

12. Ensure our education system is inclusive

Total Commonwealth funding to all schools across Australia will be a record \$73.6 billion over the forward estimate period (2016-17 to 2019-20). For the 2018-2020 school years, recurrent school funding will be indexed by an education specific indexation rate of 3.56 per cent plus enrolments which reflects more accurately the real growth in education costs. Consequently, the Coalition will provide an additional \$1.2 billion over four years from 2017-2018. Total Commonwealth funding to all school across Australia continues to grow every year and will increase by \$4.1 billion (a 26.5 per cent increase from 2015-16 to 2019-20).

An additional \$118.2 million will be provided for students with a disability in 2016 and 2017. This new money is in addition to the current students with a disability loading provided through the *Australian Education Act 2013* which continues to meet the government's commitment for funding certainty from 2014-17.

This funding will support quality education programmes and initiatives for students with a disability. It also helps schools meet their obligations under the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* so

students with a disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

In total, therefore, the Commonwealth is providing students with disability funding of \$1.4 billion and \$1.5 billion in 2016 and 2017 respectively, as part of a \$5.3 billion investment from 2014 to 2017. Funding for students with disability beyond 2017 will be discussed as part of the negotiations with States and Territories and the non-Government sector on the funding model for 2018 and beyond.

In addition, the new \$543 million Inclusion Support Programme will commence on 1 July 2016 to help child care services address barriers to participation for around 15,000 children with additional needs, particularly children with disability.

13. Make our infrastructure and communications accessible

The Turnbull Coalition supports making infrastructure and communications accessible for people with disability.

The NDS Report released in December 2015 highlighted positive actions by each level of Government, and the community as a whole, towards creating a more accessible and inclusive environment. This has been enhanced by improved adherence to planning and regulatory systems such as the *Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010* and *Disability Standards to Accessible Public Transport 2002*. An increased awareness and application of universal design principles across housing, transport and public infrastructure such as inclusive playgrounds, has brought with it positive improvements for people with disability.

In June 2014, the Coalition Government made a significant contribution to this goal by signing the *Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or otherwise Print Disabled* in Geneva. Work is currently underway towards ratification of the Treaty through Federal Parliament. The Treaty will come into effect following ratification by 20 countries and will ultimately provide millions of people with vision impairments around the world access to more books published in accessible formats — including large print, braille or audio.

A re-elected Turnbull Coalition Government will continue to work with States and Territories to implement the NDS and drive further enhancements to ensure people with disability live in accessible and well-designed communities with opportunity for full inclusion in social, economic, sporting and cultural life.