

MEDIA RELEASE

29 July 2010

Promise a first step towards securing future disability care

First steps towards the reform of the fractured and crisis-driven disability system in Australia have been promised in the Australian Labor party campaign announcement for people with disabilities and their families. This 'down-payment' on further reform includes a 10 year national plan for disability, improved outcomes for young children with disabilities, and extra supported accommodation places.

National Disability Services welcomes the Federal Labor Government commitment to submitting a 10 year National Disability Strategy to COAG early in its next term if reelected. Alongside the Strategy, the Government has committed to extension of some key initiatives in priority areas for people with disabilities. These initiatives are an important interim measure pending the outcome of the current Productivity Commission Inquiry into an urgently needed long term disability care and support scheme.

"These promises have targeted some of the most vulnerable people in Australia – families with young children who have just been diagnosed and people with disabilities who have ageing parents. Both groups need assurance that their future care is secure," said Dr Ken Baker, Chief Executive, National Disability Services.

"However, long term security can only be provided by building a strong foundation through a National Disability Insurance Scheme. A scheme that is sustainable, which is guaranteed to give people with disabilities the access to the flexible and responsive support services which they need," said Dr Baker.

The *Better Start for Children with a Disability* initiative offers up to \$12,000 in funding for early intervention services for children under six with sight and hearing impairment, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome or Fragile X syndrome. Early intervention is critical for improving long term outcomes of children with disabilities as there is a limited window of opportunity when optimum results can be achieved from comparatively modest investment.

Additionally, children under 13 with listed disabilities will have improved access to new Medicare services in four allied health areas. This promise will significantly help another 20,000 children aged 7-12 in addition to the 7,880 children in the 0-6 age range.

People with disabilities need improved access to supported accommodation services. \$60 million capital works funding is promised for providers who have secured recurrent funding to meet ongoing care costs. This promise should deliver an additional 150 places. Expansion of supported accommodation is an important interim measure to build capacity and reduce priority need prior to the introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme.

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About NATIONAL DISABILITY SERVICES

National Disability Services (NDS) is the peak industry association for disability services, representing 700 non-government organisations around Australia.