

2 April 2009

### **National Disability Insurance Scheme deserves “serious debate and investigation”**

At yesterday’s NDS National Press Club Lunch, televised nationally, Parliamentary Secretary Bill Shorten responded to the idea of a National Disability Insurance Scheme. “This is a big idea. It’s as big as the original idea for Medibank. It would turn our current system of providing disability services on its head ... This is a landmark idea that needs serious debate and investigation to demonstrate how it could work in a country like ours.” He said there is a lot to consider before any government could go down this path.

Mr Shorten referred to the report of the [Disability Investment Group](#) (DIG) which is almost final. The DIG will recommend that the Government commission a study into the feasibility of a National Disability Insurance Scheme. Chaired by Ian Silk – the CEO of AustralianSuper – the DIG was established to investigate new sources of funding for the disability sector.

In his short [opening speech](#) to the Lunch NDS Chief Executive Ken Baker said that Australia needs a national scheme which entitles people with severe disability to long-term care and support services.

He highlighted “the hole in Australia’s safety net - through which any one of us could fall at any time.

If you or your child is born with a heart defect or you acquire a serious illness mid-life, you are entitled, through Medicare, to medical treatment. Every Australian has that entitlement and we cherish it.

If, on the other hand, you are born with cerebral palsy or Down Syndrome or you acquire a disability mid-life through stroke or domestic accident, then you enter a lottery in which some Australians receive ample support services but many receive none at all or less than they need.”

Earlier in the day, [Radio National’s Fran Kelly](#) interviewed Ken Baker about the idea of a National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The National Press Club lunch attracted around 240 people from the media, government, business and NDS members and was booked to capacity. The new Queensland Minister for Disability [Annastacia Palaszczuk](#) attended the lunch after a meeting at NDS’s National Office with Ken Baker and Queensland State Manager Valmae Rose.

Mr Shorten spoke passionately about the barriers – sometimes physical, sometimes attitudinal – that people with disability encounter. He cited examples from the public consultation into the development of a National Disability Strategy.

The telecast will air again on ABC1 Wednesday 8th and 15th of April at 12.30pm. Bill Shorten's speech is now available on the [NDS website](#).

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