



# **Are QLD floods a bigger crisis than National Disability Services? Kelly Vincent MLC (d4d) rightfully questions the priority!**

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On Jan 6<sup>th</sup> d4d posted a wonderful quote on their face book wall.

**“Reasonable people adapt themselves. Unreasonable people attempt to adapt the world to them. All progress therefore depends on unreasonable people” .....**  
**George Bernard Shaw!**

Is it reasonable that the Queensland floods take priority over much bigger and more serious national community issues?

**Kelly blogged this week, “Why it is that a Flood levy can be assumed at the drop of a hat, yet a disability levy (NDIS) has to go through five years of productivity commissions, enquiries, review, blah blah blah... and it's still not a given... It's as if the floods are a crisis (and we know it is) yet disability isn't”**

Prophetic quotes define community leaders. Legendary British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill once described a political opponent as “ a sheep in sheep’s clothing”

Such description may well fit Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard who’s personal approach to the serious problems in QLD lacks balance, priority, vision, financial veracity and almost certainly long term sensibility.

The Qld problem and the knee jerk reaction by Gillard to suggest that we “may increase the Medicare Levy to fund flood relief” shows a disgusting lack of empathy and understanding for people with a disability and the crisis they face.

When in 2008 the “2020 ALP Rudd/ Gillard Summit” raised the idea of increasing the Medicare levy to fund almost nonexistent disability services, this was widely recognised as the best long term and sustainable funding model to address what is Australia’s most serious social issue. The levy suggestion was then discussed for two years, then sent to the Australian Productivity Commission for a two year review and will then no doubt be the subject of long winded debate with little likelihood of a proper implementation following the release of the first draft in four weeks time as shallow politicians like Gillard continue to work on short term political point scoring and not systemic problem resolution. Yesterday on Australia Day, under the new brand

catchphrase " Every Australian Counts the all new NDIS website [www.everyaustraliancounts.org.au](http://www.everyaustraliancounts.org.au) was unveiled as the NDIS campaign gathers momentum and looking expectantly for the first draft of the proposed NDIS to be published in late February.

The entire future of NDIS may now be being compromised at the drop of a hat and for little reason other than short term political expediency by Gillard jangling a flood levy increase proposal and turning such a funding option into a highly divisive political hot cake.

A quick glance at the d4d facebook page will succinctly summarize what Australians with a disability think of the Prime Ministers suggestion. In the politically incorrect but wonderfully apt d4d post Kelly's strong words show the courage and unreasonable approach that people in the disability sector may well need to adopt if the NDIS message is to be carried to the wider community. The d4d posting rightfully sparked a furious reaction and the message spreading virally at a rapid rate

The real facts about the National Disability crisis and the Qld floods make sobering reading and put the disability crisis into perspective

The Disability crisis has escalated for decades and continues today to mushroom rapidly. As of today it continues to spiral out of control and shows no signs of abating or resolution while the floods in QLD are temporary and will be largely forgotten/fixed in 12 months.

Disability is beyond peoples personal control. Quirks of genetic nature, accidents and plain bad luck drive the despair of over 1.5 million Australians yet much of the flood damage has occurred in previously flooded areas where residents, councils and the Qld state government have chosen for people to live? The Qld damage for houses and cars is estimated at \$2-5 Billion dollars.....how much was totally preventable?

You cannot insure against the birth of a child with Intellectual disability, Autism , Blindness or a plethora of other disabilities while you can insure against flood damage and despite the highly opportunistic protests from home owners it has been common knowledge for decades that insurance companies don't sell flood specific insurance unless specifically requested and special premiums paid for. Now many of these home owners ( living in flood history areas) expect the govt to help despite the fact they did not insure and intend to rebuild in the same spot?.

Disability is a national problem effecting 280,000 clients across all states with multiple and severe disability registered under the National Disability Agreement plus and estimated 1.2 million other Australians with other disability challenges.

The Qld floods are a local problem with just 30,000 homes damaged. They are not a national issue.

Disability waiting lists for accommodation number some 35,000 clients who will wait up to 40 years for appropriate accommodation (in reality many will die before ever being give appropriate services)

In Qld all properties will be rebuilt within two years. The only question is who pays?

Disability effects over 1.5 million Australian families with commonly aged parents caring for their severely disabled children for up to 60 years with little help.

In Qld no one will be left without either govt or family care in the short or long term.

Deaths in the disability sector where it is proven that the family killed a disabled child are commonplace. The court case last week where a judge delivered an open finding regarding the

tragic drowning of a disabled toddler was a tragic reminder. The deaths in Qld are the real Qld tragedy. Property loss is not. Our hearts go out to those who have lost loved ones.

\$3-5 billion will largely fix the Qld crisis

\$15-20 billion over the next 5 years is needed to put a platform under the National disability shortfall. The disability crisis is massively worse than the Qld temporary blip.

When the Gillard govt puts in a flood levy there is a strong chance it will remain and be used for other questionable things in the future. Labour Federal Governments don't commonly reduce taxes. This Federal govt is developing a tax at all cost culture that largely delivers little systemic change.

There is a strong chance the Liberal opposition will support a levy increase for family centred disability support. Tony Abbott mooted just such a fundraising move for paid parental leave before the last election recognising the family need and the recurrent nature of the financial responsibility. Such bipartisan support will be necessary to fix the National Disability Crisis

We must all for the right reasons say no to a levy for flood relief. Flood relief is essential but must come from federal general revenue. The Federal Govt can handle that issue. Re setting the bar on the Medicare levy must be reserved for a genuine crisis like disability and must happen sooner rather than later.

We must all as a matter of urgency sign on to the NDIS support program

Go to [www.everyaustraliancounts.org.au](http://www.everyaustraliancounts.org.au) and sign on now!

**David Holst**

**Parent of a child with a disability**

**Chair, Disability Speaks Steering Committee**

**Chair, Intellectual Disability Association of S.A.**

Disability Speaks will distribute on behalf of any organization that meets suitable criteria online information that is of wide disability community interest via our database that now numbers nearly 4,000 recipients for Government, advocacy groups and other major disability organizations. We hope in the lead up to elections, state or federal, we can distribute policy and support information from political groups. Such distribution is not in any way endorsement by Disability Speaks. From time to time Disability Speaks will also distribute media releases commenting on developments in the disability sector. We strongly encourage you to forward all releases to your friends, clients and disability supporters and encourage them to subscribe direct. To do so simply send an email subject "subscribe" to the address below, to unsubscribe please use "unsubscribe" in the subject.