



Abbott's tattoo? Tomorrow's NDIS Plan

MEDIA RELEASE: December 16th, 2013

Julia Gillard tried very very hard to convince the national disability community that Disability Care Australia was a done deal from July 1st 2013.

Scarily strangers in the street were routinely telling us how great it was the disability crisis was fixed as publicity around NDIS went into overload.

Many in the sector were not so convinced that the political hype was matched in reality (including us)

While a handful of disability sector voters swallowed the pre-election (I want your votes) hype many of us knew that NDIS promises lacked genuine substance given that NDIS was

- Not fully legislated
- Not fully funded
- Eligibility was not formalised
- Service levels were not agreed and
- Costs were not qualified
- Rushed into a pilot scheme at a mad pace before the September election (we never believed it was a real launch and always called it a pilot)
- Potentially at risk of being slowed or revamped if cost blowouts or difficulties arose especially after a government change

The Pre-election promises of the Liberal Party to maintain the agreements in place was in reality carefully worded because there was so little substance behind the Gillard rhetoric other than in principle state/ federal agreement, subject to review, subject to change, subject to who was in power state and federally in 6-7 years' time?

Yet there is no doubt that Tony Abbott has locked himself and his party into providing a NDIS scheme

NDIS is irrevocably tattooed onto Mr Abbott's psyche and his soul in the eyes of the disability community. Our new Prime Minister regardless of \$50 billion dollar budget shortfalls or challenging circumstances is indelibly committed to NDIS. Whether this tattoo is inside his padded lycra shorts or next to his heart there is no removal or optional backing away from his public commitments to NDIS..

The current dialogue around NDIS at Federal Level is not unexpected. NDIS was always going to be reviewed by a new government (or even a new ALP leader)

The new name, new language and review is not in itself scary or a cause of concern particularly given recently announced cost blowouts of up to 50% . The appointment of a select committee announced today to review NDIS that includes a cross section of representatives from all parties is a positive if the dialogue at the table is bipartisan.

Above all else NDIS must be

1. Financially long term sustainable
2. Targeted at those most in need
3. Consumer driven with choice underpinning every outcome

The attached press release from NDS summarises latest commentary around the situation very well (see below)

If Abbott, Hockey and co are working on a better, more sustainable NDIS plan we will applaud them, if "The New NDIS" meets community expectations.

If they are working on a plan to diminish NDIS or alter the fundamentals of the philosophy and integrity that NDIS was to be built upon then we trust that they quickly reconsider.

The Gonski backflip, followed by Abbott intervention, followed by the Pyne backflip (which ended up costing an extra \$1.2 billion) should be a topical reminder to Abbott and Hockey that NDIS is now an expectation of our Nation and their job is to make it happen. To end up spending an extra \$1.2 billion on education while being seen as marginalising election promises takes a special ability to stuff up that politicians seem to have a monopoly on regardless of party affiliation. The public emotion around the Gonski wavering would be a ripple compared to the tsunami that would arise if NDIS became somehow in play? We don't expect that to happen.

Let's hope Father Christmas brings all Federal parliamentarians a healthy dose of renewed Bi Partisan support for NDIS and a renewed commitment to make it happen as soon as possible. While Australia is financially challenged NDIS must remain the top priority.

Because the disability crisis in Australia is not fixed, it is actually getting worse day by day!!!!!!!!!!



National News Update

13 December 2013

Launch Sites are now Trial Sites

The NDIS launch sites are now trial sites following today's meeting of the Council of Australian Governments.

The change in language is subtle but signals the Commonwealth Government's concern that aspects of the NDIS design are not yet right. Early data suggesting that the average cost of individualised support packages exceeds the estimate has aroused concern within government.

Should we be alarmed at the change in language?

The previous Labor Government used the term 'launch' to underline its commitment to the full implementation of the NDIS. NDS would be very concerned if the term 'trial' heralded a retreat from commitment to full implementation.

As yet there is no evidence of that. Recent statements from the Government (including the Prime Minister) affirm the Federal Coalition's support for the full implementation of the NDIS. And today's COAG communique states: "jurisdictions reaffirmed their strong commitment to implementing the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) across Australia."

Testing the design, identifying flaws and making adjustments where necessary were always central to the purpose of the launch phase of the NDIS - and should remain so. The communique underlines this:

"Important lessons are being learnt from the NDIS trial sites in the Hunter in NSW, the Barwon area in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, and they will inform full-scheme design."

"COAG agreed to ask disability Ministers to report in March 2014 on progress with trials, including options to improve the implementation of the scheme and ensure the scheme operates on insurance principles to deliver positive outcomes for people with disability in a fiscally sustainable way."

NDS agrees that improvements in the implementation of the NDIS are required, but emphasises that such adjustments should be made to maintain the integrity

of the NDIS, not diminish it.

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