



Mr Ross Joyce
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Federation of Disability Organisations

By email only: Helen.Cameron@afdo.org.au

Dear Mr Joyce

Thank you for writing to Labor about the AFDO election platform.

Labor supports the Royal Commission into the Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

As AFDO would be aware, people with disability, families and advocates have long called for a Royal Commission. It was great to have AFDO by our side two years ago in Melbourne when the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, Shadow Minister for Disability and Carers, Carol Brown and the former Shadow Minister for Families and Social Services, Jenny Macklin, announced that a Shorten Labor Government would establish a Royal Commission.

We are very disappointed the Liberal Government has chosen not to include redress in the Terms of Reference for the Royal Commission. Labor will amend the Terms of Reference to specifically cover the investigation of redress. It is important the Royal Commission is about justice as well as change.

Labor is acutely aware of the concerns raised by people with disability and dozens of advocacy organisations about conflict of interest concerns in relation to certain Royal Commissioners. We take the views of people with disability and disability advocates very seriously. Labor has consistently urged the Government to consult properly and meaningfully on the Royal Commission. It is clear this has not occurred.

A Shorten Labor Government will review the appointment of the Royal Commissioners questions have been raised about, in consultation with people with disability and advocates. It is essential that people with disability have full confidence in the Royal Commission.

For the Royal Commission to be effective, people with disability must be properly supported before, during and after the giving of evidence. People must have access to support and advocacy. Labor will make sure the people who are participating in the Royal Commission are properly supported, and the Royal Commission is accessible and inclusive.

A Shorten Labor Government will develop a new National Disability Strategy, as recommended by the Productivity Commission. We will also seek agreement from the states and territories for a new National Disability Agreement that sets out the responsibilities of governments in the context of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). These will

include clear and reported targets for employment, education, housing, transport, justice, health and reducing young people in nursing homes.

While the NDIS is designed to provide reasonable and necessary supports to people with disability, it was never designed to take the place of the health system, or the school system. Accessibility and inclusion need to be improved across mainstream services to better support all Australians, not just those in the NDIS.

At the same time, as people live longer, the aged care sector will also need to better meet the needs of people with disability.

People with disability have a right to access mainstream services just like every other Australian. Right now, the interface between mainstream services and the NDIS is not working for people with disability, especially where people need concurrent supports from the NDIS and mainstream services. People are often stuck in hospital, unable to leave prison, or simply fall between the cracks. This is particularly true for those with mental ill-health or psychosocial disability.

Labor will work with the states and territories to make sure the NDIS works better with mainstream services. We will also work with the states and territories to ensure there are adequate supports for people with disability who are not eligible for the NDIS, as part of agreeing on a new National Disability Strategy and National Disability Agreement.

A Shorten Labor Government will set up an NDIS Future Fund to secure the long-term financial future of the NDIS.

The Liberals have botched the rollout of the NDIS. The Scheme is beset by delays and 77,000 Australians are missing out as a result. On average, people are only using half their first plan and many simply aren't getting the services they need. Next year alone, the Liberals will short-change the NDIS – and the people who rely on it – by \$1.6 billion. This is money that needs to be set aside for people with disability, not diverted to handouts for the top end of town.

A Shorten Labor Government will legislate an NDIS Future Fund to secure the long-term financial future of the NDIS. The NDIS Future Fund will hold any future NDIS underspends, starting with the \$1.6 billion underspend in 2019-20. Money quarantined in the NDIS Future Fund will be for use only in the NDIS. The NDIS Future Fund will be managed by the Future Fund.

A Shorten Labor Government will work with the states and territories towards a person-first approach to the NDIS. The goal of this approach is to stop people falling through the cracks between state systems and the NDIS. A person-first approach will ensure services are provided while the division of responsibility for funding is sorted out.

A Shorten Labor Government will also ask the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to ensure robust Provider of Last Resort arrangements are in place and ready for people leaving hospital or prison, as well as to support people with complex needs or behaviours,

including those with mental ill-health, who are eligible for the NDIS. We can't rely on the market to provide these important services at the last minute. The NDIA needs to work with state governments to make sure they are in place. This will mean more services will be available when people need them most. It will also reduce the likelihood that people are stuck in hospital, nursing homes or prison – or left without services – because of pointless arguments about funding between state and federal bureaucrats.

A Shorten Labor Government will double existing support for Disability Representative Organisation advocacy groups – investing an additional \$10 million over the next four years.

Strong advocacy is essential to ensuring the interests of people with disability are foremost as the Scheme rolls out across the country. Advocacy amplifies the voice of people with disability and their families. Listening to advocates is essential to improving systems and services and getting the NDIS back on track.

People with disability, their families and their advocates spent years fighting for the NDIS. Now, because of their hard work, the NDIS is real. But as the NDIS expands, independent advocacy becomes more important, not less.

Labor also understands individual advocacy helps people navigate the Scheme effectively and improves services and supports. Labor will work with the NDIA and disability advocates to help increase access to individual advocacy during the planning and implementation process. Labor will also ensure specialist advocacy is available to support people with disability and their families to participate in the Royal Commission.

A Shorten Labor Government will work with advocates to increase support for advocacy within the NDIS. This includes ensuring peak body funding.

The Australian Public Service should be a leader in the employment of people with disability. Labor will set a disability employment target of 6 per cent by 2022, increasing the number of people with disability in the federal public service by 3,500 in Labor's first term. This is an interim target on a pathway to further improvement, not a distant promise two elections away.

More information about Labor's plan to fix the NDIS is available [here](#). Our additional commitments in relation to disability and carers are available [here](#). Labor's proposal to invest in the NDIS workforce is also available [here](#).

Thank you for the opportunity to answer your election questions. Fixing the NDIS and continuing disability reform will be high priority for a Shorten Labor Government. We look forward to continuing to work with AFDO to improve services, accessibly and inclusion.

Yours Sincerely

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