



21 June 2016

Ms Julie McKay
Vision Australia
Government Relations and Policy Team
Julie.McKay@visionaustralia.org

Dear Ms McKay,

Thank you for writing to Bill Shorten and the Labor team on behalf of Vision Australia and for sharing your thoughts and suggestions.

Labor believes people with disability deserve the same opportunities as any other Australian to participate in our economy.

Labor is committed to helping people with disability into the workforce and its support for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is crucial to achieving positive outcomes.

Shadow disability reform minister, Jenny Macklin, announced on May 31st that Labor would help establish an independent disability organisation to promote, and coordinate the development and delivery of disability employment action plans.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) was designed and delivered by Labor and is giving more individual support to people with disability so they have access to employment opportunities.

But the NDIS is just one part of the solution.

As well as delivering the NDIS, a Shorten Labor government will deliver three concrete actions in our first term to boost job opportunities for people with disability.

Labor's jobs plan will encourage business and community organisations to employ more Australians living with disability, trial reforms to disability employment services and ensure more people with disability can work in the public service.

Labor's plan is to support businesses and not-for-profit organisations to develop their own disability employment action plans.

These action plans would allow organisations to:

- Identify existing barriers to employment for people with disability in their workplace.
- Improve recruitment policies and procedures so they are more inclusive.

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- Outline specific strategies and targets to boost employment and training opportunities for people with disability within their organisation.

Businesses will continue to be supported by the employment assistance fund, which helps fund workplace modifications so that people with disability can succeed in the work place.

Labor will provide \$1m to an independent, national not-for-profit disability organisation so they can promote, advise and coordinate the development and delivery of disability employment action plans. The successful organisation will be selected from a competitive tender process.

The last Labor government delivered big changes to employment support services for people with disability and a Shorten Government will build on Labor's record with a new approach to better integrate disability employment services and the NDIS.

Since 2010, the number of people with disability receiving employment support has increased by almost 50 per cent and the number of job placements has doubled, but we know the current system is far from perfect. That's why the next Labor government will trial further reforms to improve disability employment services.

Labor will invest \$5m to trial a new approach to better integrate disability employment services and the NDIS. In selected NDIS locations, people with disability looking for work will be able choose their own employment supports as part of their individual plan. This means they can obtain a range of employment assistance from different service providers, depending on their individual needs.

Labor recognises if we want more businesses and organisations to employ Australians with disability, we must first lead by example. A Labor government will task the Australian Public Service Commission with developing a series of employment targets for people with disability, in partnership with different departments and agencies and in consultation with disability advocates. The employment targets will be national, department and agency-specific, and will include targets for leadership positions.

Commonwealth departments and agencies will also be expected to develop or update disability employment action plans to make sure these targets are met. In this way, Labor will act as we expect others to act – providing opportunities for people with disability to succeed at work.

Labor agrees with you that education is a critical pathway for transitioning students who are blind or have low vision successfully into meaningful employment. Labor's *Your Child. Our Future* represents the most significant improvement in school education in Australia for two generations.

Improving education is the key to opportunity, to innovation and to the future economic and social prosperity of our nation.

No matter what their background, no matter where they live - city, suburb or in the regions – no matter what type of school they go to – Government, Catholic or Independent, Labor wants every child to have the same chance of succeeding at school, and in life, as any other child in the country.

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Students with disability are too often missing out on the opportunities to learn that are taken for granted by other students. According to a recent survey of parents:

- One in five students with disability does not attend school full time; and
- One in four students with disability has been denied school enrolment.

Students with disability are also significantly less likely to finish school – with lifelong impacts on people’s employment prospects and economic participation:

- 26 per cent of people with a disability do not go beyond Year 10, compared to 18 per cent of people without a disability; and
- 36 per cent of people aged 15-64 years with reported disability had completed year 12 compared to 60 per cent of people without a disability.

The most important factor in making sure students with disability get the support they need at school is fully implementing needs-based funding in our schools.

It is widely acknowledged that there are many students with disability whose needs have not been adequately identified.

In 2013, Labor established Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) to determine the level of adjustment and support required for all students to fully participate in school education. Part of this process was to determine the level of unmet need.

The Turnbull Government has chosen not to release the outcomes of the NCCD and has left many students without the adequate support they need.

A Shorten Labor Government will work with the States and Territories to properly fund a disability loading in line with the outcomes of the NCCD process. Students with disability, their parents and teachers have waited long enough - Labor will provide \$320 million from 2017 in additional funding, more than reversing the Turnbull Government’s cuts to the More Support for Students with Disabilities program.

Your Child. Our Future will also implement the recommendations of the Senate Inquiry into the Education and Attainment of Students with Disability, including:

- Establishing a national strategy to improve the education of students with disability.
- Making it mandatory for all initial teacher education courses to teach best-practice skills in inclusion.
- Prioritising the development of a national approach to modifying the curriculum for students with disability.

Labor will also ensure more students with disability get the chance to participate fully in learning and school activities, by supporting school communities so they can purchase assistive technology and improve school buildings. Labor will invest \$30 million so that from 2017:

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- At least 3,000 grants of up to \$5,000 will be available for schools to invest in equipment and technology to support learning for students with disability.
- At least 500 grants of up to \$30,000 will be available for minor capital works so students can access school facilities and be properly included in school activities.

And, under Labor, more teachers will be supported to become experts in supporting students with disability and extra learning needs, by investing \$40 million for up to 2,000 teachers to complete a Masters in Inclusive Education.

The development of a new curriculum for students with disability will be fast-tracked so students with disability get the same learning opportunities as their peers.

Under the former Labor Government, the ABC commenced a 13-week technical trial of audio description (AD) on ABC1 that aimed to assess the technical challenges of delivering AD in Australia.

This was the first time that AD was made available on television for over 600,000 Australians who are blind, vision impaired or can benefit from the service.

Thank you for the points you have made as to how a Shorten Labor Government could support the provision of improved access to television for people who are blind and vision impaired into the future. In light of the savage cuts by the Abbott-Turnbull Government, a Labor Government will review this area of policy and will certainly take your points into consideration.

In this election, Labor is the party that is putting people first – we are prioritising better schools, better healthcare, and Budget repair that is fair.

For more information about Labor's positive plan for Australia visit www.alp.org.au and www.100positivepolicies.com.

I hope we can count on the support of Vision Australia and your community.

Kind regards,

ALP Information Services Unit

Australian Labor Campaign Headquarters

www.alp.org.au

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