

HACSU: lobbying for a stronger NDIS

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The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is today one step closer towards becoming a reality after the House of Representatives passed the draft bill. The NDIS is considered a ground breaking initiative which will change the way Australians with a disability receive funding to assist them with their needs.

Presently, funding for disability is based on historical budget allocations. With the NDIS, it will allow a funding pool based on individual needs via an assessment of their needs. This is a positive step to ensuring people with a disability have control over the care they need to ensure they can fully access the community.

Last week, in a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs-Legislation, HACSU State Secretary Lloyd Williams reasserted the union's support for the NDIS as a great reform for people with a disability. However, HACSU stressed key areas of concern that needed to be addressed in the rules to ensure both disability workers and people with a disability are protected:

People with profound and cognitive disabilities and are unable to self-advocate are at high risk of exploitation by unscrupulous service providers. HACSU recommended the rules be tightened to ensure quality care, support and standards are met with regards to police checks, qualification standards and experience.

Disability support workers are at high risk of losing secure working conditions, with the sector moving towards insecure work. This in turn, will lead to qualified and experienced disability support workers leaving the sector to pursue more secure working conditions.

The union believes that, in order to succeed, the NDIS rules need to address the above concerns. Otherwise it will negate the hard-won standards HACSU members have fought for over the past thirty years to ensure the disability sector is professional, with minimum standards to ensure quality care, and working pay and conditions to ensure workers remain in the sector.

Thanks to the HACSU's Senate Committee submission, the committee has recommended "implementation of the NDIS does not lead to more insecure working conditions in the sector, and that measures are put in place to enhance the skills, training and capacity of the disability workforce". (Recommendation 21, Chapter 6)

The legislation will now go before the Senate, where it is expected to pass with unanimous support from all political parties. HACSU officials have been lobbying, and are continuing to lobby federal MPs in both Canberra and Melbourne to ensure these issues are actioned. It is important that both workers and people with a disability are protected in the rules to ensure they are not exploited.

The draft NDIS Rules are now available for comment and can be found online at <http://yoursay.ndis.gov.au/draft-NDIS-rules>. All members are urged to read through these documents and provide feedback.