

Senate motion for a National Disability Strategy

Tuesday 2 April 2019

"The Senate—

notes that:

- In 2015, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that there were 164,000 Australians with an autism diagnosis and a prevalence rate of 2.8% for those aged between 5-14 years (around 81,000 children), though this does not reflect the large numbers of autistic adults who remain undiagnosed,
- 85% of Australians have personal contact with an autistic person; despite this, only 29% of Australians believe they understand how to support autistic people, and only 4% of autistic people and their families agree that people in the community know how to support them,
- 29% of all NDIS participants have a primary diagnosis of autism, representing the largest diagnostic cohort in the scheme, and (iv) waiting times for diagnosis in the public system can be between 12 months to two years;

further notes that:

- between 40% to 70% of autistic people experience a co-occurring mental health condition,
- international studies have found that autistic people have a life expectancy between 20 and 36 years shorter than the general population,
- in 2015, the unemployment rate for autistic people was 31.6%, which is three times the rate for all people with disability and almost six times the rate of people without a disability,
- 35% of autistic students achieve Year 10 or below, compared with 17% of all students – only 6.5% have a Bachelor's degree or above, half the rate of all people with a disability, and
- autistic people and their families experience significant social isolation with 51.6% agreeing that they feel socially isolated and 39.3% agreeing that they sometimes feel unable to leave the house due to concerns about discriminatory or negative behaviours in the community;

acknowledges that:

- across Europe, a number of countries have developed national autism plans,
- analysis has found that European countries which have a national autism plan or strategy appear to bring about a positive impact and change for autistic people, and
- the Victorian Government inquiry into services for people with autism spectrum disorder recommended the development of a National Autism Strategy, highlighting the benefits, including:
 - ⇒ increasing understanding of autism in the community, and
 - ⇒ creating a common set of aims for policy makers, service providers, departments and agencies, noting that many of the issues faced by autistic people cut across Commonwealth and state responsibilities;
- affirms that a National Autism Strategy would complement the current National Disability Agreement and National Disability Strategy by providing a much-needed cohort-specific response for autism;
- encourages the Government to develop a National Autism Strategy, in partnership with autistic people and their families and carers, to determine a set of actions with measurable outcomes to improve the life outcomes of Autistic people.