

Summary of Party Disability Policies, Questions and Comments

prior to the

2009 Queensland Election

as at

**3:30pm on Wednesday,
20 March 2009**

Please note: This is a summary only, please ensure you refer to formal party policies to inform your final vote.

Australian Labor Party

From the *Social Justice, Youth and Community Services* (platform from 2007),
[Bligh Government to Help Fund Care for Young People](#) and *Disability Alliance Election Priorities — ALP response*

Initiatives addressing the stated priorities of the Disability Alliance:

Access to Personal Care

- Please see overleaf

Access to Aids and Equipment

- Work towards greater funding to improve access to medical aids.
- Work towards more consistent access to aids and equipment between states and territories.
- Undertake a review of the Medical Aids and Subsidy Scheme.
- Explore a repair / replacement system for medical aids and opportunities to improve forward-planning for people requiring medical aids

Health Services for people with a disability

- Establish a taskforce with NGO representation to provide advice to Government on how implementation of the Queensland Health policy for the provision of health services for people with disability can be improved.
- Establish a cross agency Committee to examine issues in relation to access to health services by adults with a decision making impairment.

Other new disability initiatives

An elected Labor candidate would support:

Institutional care and other accommodation

- Providing three million dollars to help fund respite care for young people with disabilities on the Gold Coast (already allocated).
- \$1.5 million recurrent to provide residents with support services.
- \$1.3 million to assist with construction and set-up of 16-bed apartment complex in Sinnamon Park.

Disability Alliance comments:

Disability Alliance was provided with a direct response to our election priorities. Please note that this response does not appear on the ALP Queensland campaign website, and is therefore provided as an attachment (see page 8).

FAMILY FIRST

From [Supporting People With A Disability](#) and [Caring For Carers](#)

Initiatives addressing the stated priorities of the Disability Alliance:

Access to Personal Care	No specific mention.
Access to Aids and Equipment	No specific mention.
Health Services for people with a disability	Family First support improvements to health services to improve health care for people with a disability .

Other new disability initiatives

An elected Family First candidate would support:

Education

- Initiatives to make it easier for people with a disability to access education and learning, such as by finishing school or attending TAFE or university.

Employment

- Urging the Government and private sector employers to promote the benefits of employing people with disabilities. Working with people who have disabilities promotes understanding and respect for people who are different and have special needs.
- Initiatives to ensure people with a disability can participate more fully in the paid workforce.

Institutional care and other accommodation

- Funding age sensitive hostel and village living accommodation for people with a disability, similar to that provided in the aged care sector - this will in particular assist aged carers no longer able to care for their loved one.

Carers

- Case managers appointed to carers to help them manage and access appropriate support services for their loved ones.
- Giving all primary carers one month's holiday each year with carers receiving the Carer Payment to be able to apply for a payment of \$4,320 (four times average weekly earnings) for a month, which they can use to pay for care services while they take their annual leave - this new payment is in addition to existing respite care entitlements.

Funding

- Fair and adequate income support and care for people with severe disabilities to ensure a fulfilling life with opportunity for social, recreational and creative activities.
- Introducing a population-based benchmark funding model for the disability sector similar to the aged care sector - the current model is purely historic and is a poor system for calculating the amount of funding the disability sector needs.

THE GREENS

From the Greens [Health Policy](#) and [Disability Policy](#)

Initiatives addressing the stated priorities of the Disability Alliance:

Access to Personal Care

- Conduct an audit of supported accommodation available to children and adults with disabilities or mental health problems.
- Develop appropriate accommodation options for young people currently inappropriately housed in aged care facilities.
- Reduce the complexity of complying for income and transfer the gains towards providing more direct support services.

Access to Aids and Equipment

- Allow full tax deductibility for any aids, devices, special equipment or services which directly assist people with disability in finding and maintaining employment.
- Remove GST and import duty from specialist aids, devices, appliances and services for people with a disability.

Health Services for people with a disability

- Ensure adequate and appropriate resources to attain optimal mobility, independence and early intervention to maximise potential and minimise health problems.
- Health policy to explicitly include people with disability, their family support and where appropriate paid disability support personnel.

Other new disability initiatives

An elected Greens Candidate would support:

Carers

- Expanding funding for carer respite programs, especially carers of individuals with disabilities or mental health problems.
- Providing parents, partners, relatives and friends who act as carers with eligibility for registration as professional carers and adequate support, including income and respite.

Education

- Increase funding to meet the educational needs of disadvantaged and at risk members of society, including those affected adversely by location, ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability or ill health.
- Increase funding to ensure that children with special needs can attend local schools with appropriate professional and material resources.

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Institutional care and other accommodation

- Provide adequate funding for group homes for disabled people, especially young, profoundly disabled, care in a home like setting and other home-based support, and improve capacity of such service options through better links between health, housing, social welfare and disability services.
- Provide funding to improve the number of stable, adequately regulated accommodation services, and ensure that such services target a variety of age ranges, clinical needs and spectrum of disability.
- Increasing funding for appropriate, including age-appropriate, accommodation and support services for people with disability, including flexible accommodation models.
- Increasing funding for high quality, age-appropriate institutional care for people with very high and complex care needs.
- Providing increased respite care services and facilities, in-home and emergency support, crisis accommodation and a range of supported accommodation options.

Advocacy and education

- Strengthening and providing funding for disability advocacy services, community education programs, and the removal of structural barriers to equality of access to education, training and employment.

Employment and training

- Providing meaningful employment and training opportunities which take into account the specific needs of people with disability.
- Adequately resourcing pathways that support school leavers with disability to make the transition from school into meaningful employment, educational and vocational programs or other community-based activities.
- Supporting access to specialised employment support services for people with disability who choose to enter the workforce.
- Improving access to training, development and personal support to staff working in disability services, and adopt workforce measures to increase the professional mix of staff.
- Improving pay and conditions and career structures for providers of services for people with disabilities.

National standards

- Enacting national standards to protect people with disability, where required, via monitoring, investigative powers and enforcement.

Transport

- Coordinating disability transport services to increase utilization and availability to ensure easy access to health services and community.
- Housing and accommodation placed with access to community and transport hubs.

LIBERAL NATIONAL PARTY

From '[LNP to introduce a system of social inclusion that works](#)'

Initiatives addressing the stated priorities of the Disability Alliance:

Access to Personal Care

- Establishing a \$600 million per year fund to provide assistance for people with a disability.
- Services funded on ability to cater for the community's need – and led by the non-government sector.
- Making care packages simpler and more effective, taking into consideration the personal needs of recipients.

Access to Aids and Equipment

No specific mention

Health Services for people with a disability

Establish Hospital Liaison Staff positions – by relocating existing DSQ staff (i.e. no additional positions)

Other new disability initiatives

An elected LNP candidate would support:

DSQ Restructure

- Absorbing Disability Services Queensland into a new Department of Social Inclusion with an Office for People with Disabilities. The department's main role will be as assessor, licensor, trainer and fund provider. All changes to be put in place using existing staff and funding of the department.

Capital Works

- The LNP have also announced that they will fast-track all outstanding capital works funded through Disability Services Queensland.

Education

- 105 more teachers for special needs students each year.

Clarification sought by the Disability Alliance:

The Disability Alliance has sought and received confirmation from the LNP that the \$600 million mentioned in their policy was meant to reflect the \$417.26 million in total grants and subsidies currently available for disability service provision (declared in the 2007-08 DSQ annual report), plus an increase in funding for direct disability support.

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The Member for Burdekin and Shadow Minister for Social Inclusion has told the Disability Alliance:

"in 2007-08 \$225 million was spent on Accommodation Support Services, \$150 million was spent on Community Services and \$42 million was spent on Respite Services – a total of \$417,263,000.

The funding for these services will be increased to \$600 million under an LNP Government. In addition, funding will be more transparent, simpler and the Department's role as a competitor for funding will be minimized.

Federal funding for these services will remain untouched.

Some existing staff will be placed in hospitals to serve as hospital liaison staff for people with disabilities.

There is a huge unmet need in the community and it is my commitment to meet this need."

The Disability Alliance has also sought clarification as to whether these increases would come from new investment or would be achieved through cost-shifting (e.g. by outsourcing DSQ's direct service provision). To which the Member for Burdekin and Shadow Minister for Social Inclusion replied:

*"The increased funds will come from reduction of waste and duplication. For example, the Department in 2007-08 spent **more** capital funding on a new computer system than it did on the **total** of*

- *All abilities playgrounds,*
- *young people in residential care,*
- *strengthening NGOs,*
- *cluster housing,*
- *mental health,*
- *the targeted response,*
- *respite services,*
- *innovative housing,*
- *tailored accommodation in Wacol and Deception Bay, and*
- *facilities in Gladstone, Ipswich, Toowoomba, and Maryborough*
combined.

It is a Department that failed to meet its budgeted capital spending on the targeted response to the Carter report in 2007-08, by an incredible 93 per cent.

It is also the Department that promised \$100 million more for Disability Services than it delivered in budgets from 2001. That's \$100 million that could have been – and was promised to be – spent on facilities to help people with disabilities.

The LNP will make sure that that money is spent on people with disabilities."

Disability Alliance election priorities – ALP response

Queensland's Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme is the worst in the nation. People cannot afford the medical aids and equipment they need, which means that Queenslanders:

- 1. have less independence (relying more on family and service providers than they would otherwise need to);*
- 2. have longer hospital stays than they need; and*
- 3. can be re-admitted to hospital with complications and infections caused by inappropriate equipment.*

Response

As you would be aware, in May 2008 Commonwealth, State and Territory Disability Ministers noted that was a range of issues relating to the delivery of aids and equipment to people with disabilities across jurisdictions that need to be addressed.

Accordingly, Disability Ministers agreed to work toward more consistent access to aids and equipment between states and territories. A re-elected Bligh Government looks forward to participating in this important partnership with the Rudd Government.

More than anything, our objective in this national work will be to work towards greater funding to improve accessibility to medical aids.

In addition, a re-elected Bligh Government will also undertake a review of the Medical Aids and Subsidy Scheme to consider the issues you have raised. As part of this, the Government will explore a repair / replacement system for medical aides and opportunities to improve forward-planning for people requiring medical aides.

The problem with patient care policies and procedures in Queensland hospitals is that currently, they result in:

- 1. people with disabilities being neglected to the point that they are made vulnerable by the health system;*
- 2. a reluctance from people with a disability to enter the health system (which also makes them vulnerable);*
- 3. disability support workers being required, in many places, to support their clients throughout every stage of contact with the hospital (which is a poor use of resources); and*
- 4. people with a disability experiencing poor health outcomes due to a lack of timely access to support (for things like communication and assistance to navigate the health system).*

As you would be aware, Queensland Health has a Disability Service Plan 2007-2010, which provides a policy framework outlining how Queensland Health will meet the needs of people with a disability and their families.

In recognition of the issues you have raised a re-elected Bligh Government will commit to establishing a taskforce with NGO representation to provide advice to Government on how implementation of the Queensland Health policy for the provision of health services for people with a disability can be improved.

We will also establish cross agency Committee to examine issues in relation to access to health services by adults with a decision making impairment.

In addition, the Disability Services Act 2006 requires all Queensland Government departments to implement Disability Service Plans. Disability Service Plans aim to provide increased responsiveness and gradual improvement of government services in addressing the needs of people with a disability including more coordinated whole-of-government responses.

The Queensland Health Disability Service Plan 2007-2010 includes 53 key actions with a focus on improving access to safe and sustainable specific health care services for people with disabilities as a part of the overall reform of Queensland Health.

DSQ has recently purchased the license to use the Comprehensive Health Assessment Program. This program serves as a guide for general practitioners, nurses, disability service providers and other professionals to collect the health information and medical history for people with an intellectual disability, as well as to work together to prepare a health plan.

The Comprehensive Health Assessment Program can also be used to provide good base-line data on the health status of people with an intellectual disability and thus enable health related changes to be tracked over time.

This tool is available to all DSQ funded non-government service providers and is used as part of the annual health review for people with an intellectual disability. A recent evaluation of the Comprehensive Health Assessment Program highlights a substantial increase in the attention of medical practitioners to the health needs of adults with an intellectual disability and more health promotion and disease prevention activities.

Personal Care

Thousands of Queenslanders who are eligible to receive personal care and/or support are unable to access the support they need, resulting in:

- *A poor quality of life of thousands of Queenslanders*
- *Young people with disability being housed in aged care facilities and other inappropriate arrangements*
- *Queenslanders with a disability unable to work (and pay tax)*
- *Family breakdowns across the State; and*
- *Under pressure on other areas of the community (including family and community services, and the criminal justice system.*

The Home and Community Care program provides options designed to improve the quality of life for frail aged and people with a disability. The Government recognises that social isolation is an issue facing too many Queenslanders, which is why the Home and Community Care program and other social isolation initiatives, promoted by this government, play a significant role in actively supporting Queenslanders to achieve their goals.

This government also supports Disability Services Queensland's Local Area Coordinator program. This program works in rural and remote communities across the State, linking people with a disability to a range of different support networks and services, depending on their individual needs and interests.

Local Area coordinators work with individuals, their families, friends and their local community to assist families to set goals and plan for the future and to link in with practical assistance. They help to build and strengthen support networks and friendships and bringing other families together to share ideas and experiences.

This program also looks at ways to maintain or gain an individuals independence in their daily life and identify ways of participating in social, recreational or other interests and be actively involved in their community.

The Bligh Government is also committed to assisting younger Queenslanders with a disability who are residing in aged care facilities due to no available alternative accommodation.

The Government has committed \$23.9 million over five years for the Younger People in Residential Aged Care Initiative, which is matched by the Rudd Government. This has been achieved through a Council of Australian Governments five-year initiative to reduce the number of young people with disabilities living in residential aged care.

Funding has been provided to non-government service providers to support people to return or remain living with their families, to live independently in public or private rental accommodation and to share with others in other DSQ shared accommodation.

DSQ has established purpose built accommodations in Brisbane, Cairns and the Gold Coast. Accommodation is also being developed on the Sunshine Coast for people to move from aged care.

Queensland is making good progress with the development and implementation of this initiative with a range of different supports being made available throughout Queensland.

This includes funding provided to Wesley Mission Brisbane, who in partnership with Youngcare, built a 16-bed apartment complex in Sinnamon Park which was opened by the Premier. The Queensland Government provided \$1.3 million to assist with the construction and set up costs. A further \$1.5 million will be provided on a recurrent basis to provide residents with support services. A re-elected Bligh government will also provide a further \$3 million to Youngcare to help fund respite care for young people with disabilities on the Gold Coast.

Further, funding has been provided to St John's Community Care in Cairns to provide support to 10 people in two purpose-built houses in Gordonvale.

People in the other areas of Queensland will also be supported and service providers will be identified for them on an individual basis.

The Bligh Labor Government will continue to move forward in working with families and individuals across the state to assist them to achieve their preferred outcomes for residential support.

The *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* provides protection for everyone in Queensland against discrimination based on disability, including those in the workplace. This government is committed to providing a workplace where there is equal employment opportunity that recognises and values the many benefits of a diverse workforce.

The Office of the Public Service Commissioner is also responsible for the administration of the Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act 1992 and ensuring that public sector agencies meet their equal employment obligations.

The Government respects any employees whose lives may be affected by mental or physical illness or disability and is committed to providing as much support as possible.

The Queensland Public Service Commissioner has developed guidelines to provide advice to Queensland public service agencies on the application of section 85 of the *Public Service Act 1996* and has developed guidelines specifically around providing advice to departments regarding open communication, procedural fairness and early and informal intervention.

The Government also provides support for people with a disability to enter the workforce with programs such as the *First Start* program, which provides traineeships at an entry level position for jobseekers with little or no work experience.

In relation to family breakdown, the Bligh Government provides a range of targeted programs to support parents – particularly families with multiple and complex risk factors - in caring for their children.

These programs include 10 Referral for Active Intervention (RAI) services, 11 Prevention and Early Intervention Projects and 11 Specialist Counselling Services.

The majority of these programs aim to provide the family support and early intervention services that medium and high risk families need to prevent their progression to the statutory child protection system.

The Government is currently focusing on strategies to increase the service capacity of prevention and early intervention services to ensure that vulnerable families receive the right service at the right time.