ALP response to Vision Australia 2015 NSW election priorities

As Shadow Minister for Disability Services it is a pleasure to provide a response to your 2015 Election Priorities document on behalf of the NSW Labor Opposition.

It was a pleasure to meet with representatives of Vision Australia recently. Your organisation's work in advocating for those with vision impairments is to be commended. I hope our discussions made clear Labor's commitment to people with vision impairments and people with disabilities more broadly.

For the sake of simplicity and brevity I will respond to each of your priorities below;

# Education

As you would be aware Labor has a long legacy of extending educational opportunity. The NDIS promises a revolution in funding and services for people with disabilities but its fundamental promise, of inclusion, cannot be achieved without appropriate access to education.

I am proud to say that Labor has committed $100 million to rescuing our TAFE system, this includes restoring disability support previously available and reversing the current inadequate funding system for people with disabilities studying at TAFE.

Labor has also committed to the creation of a standalone Minister for Disability Inclusion whose primary responsibility will be to co-ordinate policy across government to ensure that people with disabilities are able to exercise the right to be included. This remit would extend to co-ordinating services and inclusion within the Department of Education and Communities.

Should we be elected at the March 28th election we will also maintain state based disability advocacy funding meaning that support will continue to be available for people with disabilities as they negotiate access to mainstream and specialist services.

# Employment

A major component of NSW Labor's Disability Inclusion plan is our commitment to extending the opportunity of employment to those with disabilities. We know government is failing in this area, in 2009/10 the representation of people with disabilities in the NSW public sector was almost 4% as of 2014 this number had fallen to 3.1%

Labor has pledged to create a bipartisan Expert Panel on Disability Inclusion headed by former Disability Discrimination Commissioner Graeme Innes AM and Cain Beckett, Chair of the NSW Disability Council. The expert panel will be given $10 million to create programs to boost private sector employment as well as holding the responsibility for setting public sector employment targets.

NSW Labor's Expert Panel on Disability Inclusion aims to lift the issue of disability employment above party politics and will be tasked with briefing both the Minister and Shadow Minister responsible for this area.

# Getting Around

The issue of transport for people with visual impairment is an important one.

Labor is committed to creating an equitable and fair system. Labor would be happy to work with the industry and with people with disabilities to create a more effective Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme.

While we are not in a position announce our policy in relation to this issue at this point I am aware that NSW Labor's Shadow Minister for Transport, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, has been working hard over the past 4 years to find solutions to the issues which exist in this area.

# Access to Information and Accessible Voting Through iVote

Problems accessing information are a serious impediment to the participation of those with visual impairments in the broader community. The work of Vision Australia in providing accessible products and information is to be applauded.

Labor is committed to continuing funding for advocacy organisations and is opposed to any moves from the Federal or State Liberal governments to defund non-government organisations such as yours.

The iVote system is still relatively new having been introduced under the last Labor government in 2011, this year around 200,000 people are expected to take advantage of the system up from just under 50,000 at the last election.

Labor supports the continued roll out of this system, there are some issues involved in the roll out of the iVote system a will certainly lobby for its extension to both federal and local government elections.

Linda Burney MP

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