



14 JUL, 2023

Time to address shortage

Daily Telegraph, Sydney

Page 1 of 1

Time to address shortage

Jane Morrell



As we reflect on the past 10 years of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), there's no doubt that it has helped transform so many lives, providing much needed funding and support, as well as greater choice and control for people living with disability.

In 2012, a year before the NDIS was introduced, I created Carer Solutions. I had worked in the disability sector for a number of years and had met with countless frustrated and exhausted families across Australia who were facing a significant lack of options when it came to finding suitable support workers.

Carer Solutions remains the only organisation in Australia that supports people living with disability to employ disability support workers that they already know and trust. We partner with individuals and their families, to take care of all the complicated and time-consuming tasks, including compliance, insurance, and payroll obligations.

But, with a disability support worker shortage of 200,000 forecast by 2050, the government really needs to invest in attracting people to work in the disability care workforce. We know that attracting and retaining a suitably skilled, qualified workforce continues to prove a significant challenge, with the sector increasingly seen as overworked, underpaid, undervalued, and poorly trained.

In Bill Shorten's first address to the industry, he recognised that the worker shortage was a complex and challenging issue that will take more than the 'A Life Changing Life' online advertising campaign to solve.

It's crucial that we involve our First

Nations people in developing a strategy for the NDIS, with new data showing greater numbers of First Nations people are accessing the scheme.

Over a third of participants are not able to access support workers, as many NDIS services are not culturally appropriate for First Nations people with disability.

Another area that the NDIS needs to address is their systems and processes.

One of many challenging examples is the worker screening process in Tasmania.

We are currently working with government ministers to identify technical issues between Federal and State departments, highlighting the need for departments to work together, and not in silos. This worker screening issue is impacting a significant number of our Tasmanian participants and their Support Workers, and if not addressed as a matter of urgency, it will continue to affect them being able to access much-needed support.

I would also love to see more open collaboration and direct lines with providers who can assist with navigating unclear changes and ambiguous rules within the NDIS. I welcome the concept of an 'NDIS Innovation Panel', where disability service providers can collaborate on finding innovative solutions to complex challenges within the disability sector.

So as we look to the future, I think we can all agree that much needed reform and innovation is needed with the NDIS to ensure it remains sustainable for the next 10 years and beyond.

Jane Morrell is the founder and CEO of Carer Solutions