



01 JUL 2014

SENATOR THE HON MITCH FIFIELD

ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

MC14-003331

COPY

Ms Gai Brodtmann MP
Member for Canberra
205 Anketell Street
TUGGERANONG ACT 2900

Dear Ms Brodtmann *Gai*

Thank you for your letter of 13 March 2014 to the Hon Peter Dutton MP, Minister for Health, on behalf of Mr Bob Buckley about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Operational Guidelines in relation to Autism Spectrum Disorder.

At around the same time as you forwarded this correspondence, Mr Buckley's concerns were brought to the attention of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and staff in my office. As a result, my Disability Adviser, Ms Denise Ryan, met with Mr Buckley, as did the NDIA Branch Managers of Market and Sector, Ms Mary Hawkins, and Communication and Engagement, Mr Dougie Herd.

During these meetings, Mr Buckley's concerns about the eligibility criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder were discussed and some actions agreed that will follow from the meetings.

Representatives of the NDIA told Mr Buckley that Autism is not neglected in the scheme and that in fact a high proportion of current participants in the scheme have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. The NDIA will look to identify ways of improving the reporting of Autism Spectrum Disorder. The NDIA will also report on those who are deemed ineligible for the scheme via the NDIS website. Mr Buckley was advised to bring any future concerns about Agency actions and decisions directly to the NDIA.

Mr Buckley also raises concerns about the Disability Support Pension (DSP) and the transfer of Disability Employment Services (DES) to the Department of Social Services.

With regard to DSP, the Australian Government understands the importance of maintaining an adequate safety net for those who cannot provide for themselves. The Government is looking at our system of social security to ensure that there is a balance between the incentive to work and the wellbeing of the individual. This review is not about removing people from welfare. It is about ensuring Australia has a sustainable welfare system into the future.

With regard to the issues raised in relation to DES, complementary disability services and programmes, including the DES programme, have been brought together into a single new department – the Department of Social Services. This will strengthen connections and delivery across government-funded disability programmes. This will enable people with disability, as consumers of these services, to better shape government policy and effect greater control over the design of their services.

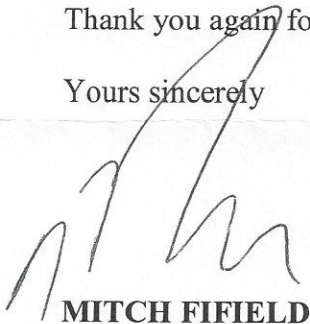
Administrative responsibility for DES transferred from the former Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations with the following resources:

- 202 staff, including the State Network, with knowledge and expertise in DES policy and programme design, contract management and data analysis;
- all administrative data relating to the DES programme; and
- no equipment (excluding employee OH&S required equipment).

The Government also delivers employment services to people with disability through Job Services Australia, which is the responsibility of the Department of Employment, and the Remote Jobs and Communities Program, which is the responsibility of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Thank you again for writing on behalf of Mr Buckley.

Yours sincerely



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26/6/14