



Australian Government

Department of Families,  
Housing, Community Services  
and Indigenous Affairs

# The Year in Disability

## What has been achieved in 2009?

The Australian Government has embarked on an ambitious reform agenda for improving the support for people with disability, their families and carers.

In the last year, the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, Bill Shorten delivered a range of achievements for people with disability and their carers.

### Helping pensioners and carers with the cost of living

Through the **Secure and Sustainable Pension Reform** package:

- delivered pension increases to around 720,000 Disability Support Pensioners and 152,000 Carer Payment recipients of \$70.83 p/f to singles and \$29.93 p/f to couples combined on the maximum adult rate
- replaced the ad hoc payment of carer bonuses with a new, ongoing \$600 Carer Supplement, benefitting around 500,000 carers with payments totalling over \$408 million this year.

Reformed overly complex and restrictive arrangements which denied financial support for carers of children with severe disability or medical conditions through changes to **Carer Payment (child)**. An additional 19,000 carers of children with severe disability are expected to benefit.

### National Disability Strategy

Delivering a long term road map to improve outcomes for people with disability and their families through the first ever **National Disability Strategy**. It will work across governments to address barriers faced by people with disability and promote their participation. The Strategy will be released in 2010.

This year the Australian Government has:

- consulted with more than 2,500 people in forums across the country with around 750 submissions also received
- launched the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council's report on the consultations - Shut Out: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia
- included the Strategy within our Council of Australian Governments reform agenda.

### Improving the lives of Australians

## Investigating new approaches

Engaged the Productivity Commission to undertake a feasibility study into a **National Disability Long-term Care and Support Scheme**. Starting early 2010, the Commission will look into the costs, benefits and feasibility of replacing the current system of disability services with a new approach which provides long-term essential care and support for people with severe or profound disabilities on an entitlement basis.

The inquiry will examine a range of options for long-term care and support including consideration of whether a no-fault social insurance approach to disability is appropriate in Australia.

The Productivity Commission will consult widely and will be assisted by an associate commissioner and an Independent Panel with specialist disability expertise. The study will report in July 2011 as a key plank in the National Disability Strategy. Terms of Reference for the study can be accessed at [www.fahcsia.gov.au](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au) under Inquiry into a National Disability Long-term Care and Support Scheme.

## Helping people with disability participate in the workforce

Released the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy – which includes:

- \$1.2 billion for new demand driven employment services for people with disability
- a \$6.8 million Disability Support Pension Employment Incentive Pilot trialling a new way of encouraging employers to offer employment to people with disability and allowing recipients to demonstrate their skills
- a \$41 million Innovation Fund for innovative projects that address barriers to employment for the most disadvantaged job seekers, operating from 1 July 2009 until 30 June 2012 and
- \$4.9 billion over three years for a new employment services program, Job Services Australia, which began on 1 July 2009

## More and better services for people with a disability

Improved access to specialist disability services such as supported accommodation, respite and in-home care under the new **National Disability Agreement**. In the first year of operation:

- over 6,200 new respite places have been delivered
- around 2,300 individual service packages and 1,260 intensive in-home places were achieved

- work has begun on more than 150 supported accommodation places
- more than 770 young people with disability have been moved out of or diverted from entering residential aged care, or received additional support services in residential aged care to make their care more appropriate.

The Government is providing more than \$5 billion over five years to the States and Territories under the Agreement. By 2012, the Australian Government's contribution will exceed \$1.2 billion, compared to \$620 million in 2007.

Increased support for children with autism and their families through the **Helping Children with Autism** package. Since the package started in 2008:

- over 4,300 children with Autism Spectrum Disorders have accessed early intervention funding of up to \$12,000
- more than 10,000 children have benefitted from new Medicare items for autism diagnosis and allied health care
- six Australian Government Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centres are being progressively rolled out
- 62 autism playgroups have so far been formed with more being progressively established across Australia
- more than 30 professional development workshops have been held with teachers.

Supporting participation of people with disability by:

- beginning to **harmonise disability parking permit** schemes across Australia
- expanding the **National Companion Card Scheme** across Australia, achieving national consistency and increasing the base of national affiliate organisations.

## Delivering on disability rights and access

Acceded to the Optional Protocol on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Further improved disability rights by:

- passing the **Disability Discrimination and Other Human Rights Legislation Amendment Bill 2008** which will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our anti-discrimination system and clarifying the obligation of employers, service providers and other parties to remove discriminatory barriers for people with disability and
- enabling the **Australian Human Rights Commission to conciliate complaints** based on breaches of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Held the first **National Dialogue on Universal Housing** bringing together experts from the building industry and people from disability organisations who agreed to work together towards a national approach to promoting accessible housing.

## Improved support for carers

Expanded access to respite and support for families caring for children and young people with disability:

- increased funding of \$26.3 million over four years for an additional 250 **outside school hours care** places for teenagers with disability
- an additional \$2.1 million in 2009-10 for **emergency and short-term respite** under the Respite Support for Carers of Young People with a Severe or Profound Disability Program
- continued implementation of **MyTime peer support** groups for parents and carers of young children with disability or a chronic medical condition.

Committed to develop a **National Carer Recognition** Framework, comprising Commonwealth Carer Recognition Legislation and a National Carer Strategy. A new **National Carer Strategy** will shape policy development and service delivery for carers, and ensure that government policies and services are coordinated.



The Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, Bill Shorten, and the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin with 2008 award finalist, Greg Killeen at the 2008 National Disability Awards.

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