

Media Release

NSW Disability Advocacy Alliance and Parliamentarians from all parties call on NSW Government to fund vital advocacy sector post June 2018

In a show of solidarity this afternoon, members from the NSW Labour party, NSW Greens, The Christian Democrats, Shooters Fishers and Farmers Australia and several Independents stood with the NSW Disability Advocacy Alliance to call on the NSW government to stop cuts to core funding currently in place for mid-2018.

Serena Ovens, convenor of the NSW Disability Advocacy Alliance advised, “without funding to enable continued independent, advocacy, information and peak representational support for people with disability, many already vulnerable people will be worse off, their voice and rights denied, and the gaps for access and inclusion in the NSW community will widen.”

Member for Gosford, 7-time Paralympian and wheelchair user, Liesl Tesch, spoke of how “advocacy is so important to people with disability and it is imperative that they can access independent supports without having to spend much needed money that would otherwise pay for daily disability needs”, such as in her own case, a wheelchair or costly, specially fitted footwear.

In addition, Ms Tesch advised that “advocacy is often required to assist people with disability to access employment, have their human rights maintained, or be fully included in community.”

Shadow Minister for Disability, Sophie Cotsis, urged the NSW government to “continue to fund advocacy post June 2018 and not expect the NDIS to meet future needs.”

Funding cuts will occur despite the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) clearly stating that individual, systemic advocacy and legal review and representation will be funded outside of the NDIS.

Member of the Legislative Council and Christian Democrat, Paul Green requested that the government doesn’t “leave anyone behind with the implementation of this important reform [NDIS] particularly people with disability in regional and rural areas, where losses of advocates will likely mean no access to support.”

Greg Piper, Member for Lake Macquarie, noted that “as members of Parliament, we deal with people who come to us all the time with their issues, and often struggle to know how to assist them, but knowing that there are organisations out there that provide disability advocacy for them is a great assistance to us as well as members of Parliament, and in ensuring that as a community that we are as inclusive as we can be.”

Mr Piper furthered with hopes, “that if the NDIS has ramifications for the community of NSW and people with disability that would negatively affect or detract from its implementation that the Government would step up and ensure that this didn’t see NSW take a backwards step in maintaining vital disability services.”

Steven Yates, member of the Physical Disability Council of NSW, and a person with disability, called on the Government to “find the relatively small amount of \$13M (annually)” to ensure people with disability such as himself, and especially the 90% of people with disability in NSW whom won’t receive funding under the NDIS, could continue to have someone to stand by them and provide a voice when, as an individual, he couldn’t affect change on his own or needed information to assist him to protect his rights, gain employment or speak up about his transport access needs.

For further information please contact:

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ABOUT the NSW Disability Advocacy Alliance

The organisations that form the **NSW Disability Advocacy Alliance** are:

- Ability Incorporated
- Action for People with Disability Inc.
- Citizen Advocacy Western Sydney Inc
- Disability Advocacy NSW
- Disability and Aged Information Service
- Ethnic Community Services Cooperative
- Family Advocacy
- First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN)
- IDEAS
- Intellectual Disability Rights Service
- Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association
- NSW Council for Intellectual Disability
- People with Disability Australia
- Physical Disability Council of NSW
- Regional Disability Advocacy Service
- Spinal Cord Injuries Australia
- Stroke Recovery Association NSW
- Synapse