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NDIS in crisis as government ‘war games’ cuts behind closed doors

Shadow Minister for the NDIS, Melissa McIntosh MP, has warned that people with disabilities and their families are being left in the dark as the Albanese Government flags billions of dollars in NDIS cuts in this year’s Budget.

“Treasurer Jim Chalmers has ‘war gamed’ billions of dollars in cuts behind closed doors with State and Territory Treasurers today, but for people with disabilities and their families, this isn’t a game. It’s their care, their support and their future,” Mrs McIntosh said.

“They are clinging to tomorrow’s Press Club speech by Health Minister Mark Butler, hoping for some clarity on how these decisions will impact them. Because right now, they have none.

“There is no doubt the NDIS has blown out far beyond the Productivity Commission’s initial \$13.5 billion forecast. At over \$50 billion a year and supporting nearly twice the expected number of participants – currently more than 760,000 – the Scheme is under strain, and without serious intervention risks collapsing under its own weight.

“The task now is to strike the right balance, fix what’s broken without pulling support away from those who need it most, and ensure the Scheme is about quality outcomes. This is not just about cost; it’s about whether the NDIS is delivering what it was designed to do. Because right now, too many of the intended benefits have been lost along the way.

“Around 94 per cent of providers are unregistered, creating a massive regulatory blind spot. That means people can effectively walk in off the street to care for vulnerable Australians, often even without a Working with Vulnerable People check.

“This is nothing short of alarming and would never be tolerated in aged care, childcare or our schools. The NDIS has become a lucrative operation that is driving price gouging. We see it every day.

Participants being quoted one price for basic services – cleaning, gardening, everyday supports – but the moment they mention they are using their NDIS plan, the price jumps. Sometimes quadruples.

“If the Albanese Government is serious about fixing the NDIS, it must start by restoring accountability, enforcing standards and protecting participants – *not* cutting plans for those who need support while up to \$5 billion is lost to fraud each year.

“But if the Government’s answer is to push people out of the NDIS, where are they supposed to go? Our health and mental health systems are already stretched and turning people away every day.

“The broader system failures are already having real consequences for participants, particularly those with psychosocial disability, following the Albanese Government’s decision to slash Medicare-subsidised psychology sessions from 20 back to 10 per year. Now, with speculation around the removal of psychosocial support, families are facing even greater uncertainty.

“The reality is, whether it’s the NDIS, Medicare or the broader health system, the supports people need simply are not there. You either qualify for the NDIS, or you fall into the state’s black hole.

“People in crisis are turning to emergency departments, often after hours, because they have nowhere else to go, yet only 37 per cent of clinicians feel confident treating psychosocial disability.

“The Albanese Government is sending people in crisis to a system that is not equipped to help them and pretending it will be enough.

“Families are being told they could be pushed off the NDIS into mainstream services that simply don’t exist or are unavailable, whether that’s mental health support, occupational therapy or speech therapy. Programs like Thriving Kids remain stalled, with no national agreement in place, creating uncertainty for families who need access to these services.

“The disability community wants the NDIS to succeed, as do we. They want a system that is sustainable, fair and fit for purpose, but they must be part of the solution, not left in the dark.”

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