



**HON. JENNY MACKLIN MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR FAMILIES AND SOCIAL SERVICES
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TV INTERVIEW
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SUBJECT/S: The Productivity Commission Report on the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

DAN CONIFER: The Productivity Commission says that it's inevitable that the scheme will be delayed by between six and twelve months. Is that something that Labor accepts?

JENNY MACKLIN, SHADOW MINISTER FOR FAMILIES AND SOCIAL SERVICES: No we don't, I think it's absolutely critical that all of us, all Governments, providers, people with disability, families do everything we possibly can to make sure that the National Disability Insurance Scheme is rolled out on time. People with disability have waited all their lives to get decent services and the last thing we want is any delay.

I was very pleased to see the Minister Christian Porter this morning say that he will not be re-negotiating the agreements. He too understands that it's important to make sure that the scheme is delivered on time.

DAN CONIFER: Given that the problems that we've seen in the first year of transition, what changes to do say need to be made so that A) those timeframes are met but also B) that the quality improves markedly on what we've seen?

JENNY MACKLIN: I think that's a very important point. First of all, let's look at what the Productivity Commission itself recommended. It acknowledged that one of the reasons for the problems that people are having getting into the National Disability Insurance Scheme is that there just aren't enough staff, there aren't enough well trained staff to make sure that people actually get into the scheme, get in on time and get good plans.

So first and foremost this Government has to lift the cap that they have imposed on staffing for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We need to make sure that there are enough staff in the National Disability Insurance Agency and that the staff are well-trained. We need the first plans to be good plans. We certainly don't want any more over the phone planning. It's meant lots and lots of mistakes, more reviews, people having to come back and of course that clogs up the system. The

other huge problem which is the responsibility of this Government is the mess that they have made with the IT system. We know that when it first came in there hadn't been any live testing before it started. Right from the beginning there were problems for people with disability and families and providers, huge problems and basically the system hasn't been able to catch up since. So fix the problems with the IT system and take the cap off the staffing for the National Disability Insurance Agency.

DAN CONIFER: Obviously, both you and the Government say that those timeframes should stay as they are. Should States especially plan for the contingency that if there are delays so that people don't fall through gaps between their current services and the NDIS?

JENNY MACKLIN: Well, first of all it's important that the States don't exit the field and stop providing services to people with disability before they come into the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We have heard reports that some states are not meeting all their obligations, not actually continuing to provide support where they should be.

The other big problem that's been identified both by the Productivity Commission and by many people in the community is that there are lots of issues with people with disability who have health problems for example, the health system trying to cost shift onto the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We don't want the States or the Commonwealth for that matter cost shifting onto the National Disability Insurance Scheme and it really is the responsibility of this Government to work with the States to make sure that they continue to provide adequate services in health and education, justice, transport all those basic services that are primarily the states' responsibility. They should not be cost shifting onto the NDIS.

DAN CONIFER: One of the more concerning elements of the Report was the sluggishness of increasing the workforce, that it needs to get up to 170,000 I think it is when the Scheme is fully rolled out. Would Labor support short-term skilled migration changes to help cover that?

JENNY MACKLIN: I think that would be incredibly disappointing. This is a huge opportunity for job growth in Australia for Australians, and once again what has this Government been doing to actually make sure that the opportunities for employment that are being created through the introduction of the NDIS, anything from 60 to 90,000 new jobs, make sure Australians can get those jobs by getting out there and increasing the opportunities in TAFEs and universities, making sure that school leavers understand the opportunities, that university graduates understand the opportunities that are being created in the National Disability Insurance Scheme. So this Federal Government has a responsibility to develop a workforce strategy – it's way overdue. Get your act together and make sure that Australians can get these jobs.

DAN CONIFER: Surely, over the next one or two years skilled professions like speech therapists and occupational therapists where qualifications are needed and simply can't get those qualifications in a short period to fill that gap. Surely skilled migration is an option?

JENNY MACKLIN: Once again, what has this Government been doing? They've been in Government for more than four years. They knew that this was a huge opportunity for Australians, for Australians to get these 60, 70, 80,000 new jobs. Get active, get people encouraged to come into disability care and support, they are fantastic jobs working with people with disability we want to make sure that Australians get the chance to get these jobs.

DAN CONIFER: If was a question of a person getting services or not getting these services because of skilled migrants coming into the country or couldn't. Where would you sit?

JENNY MACKLIN: I just reinforce again, I want Australians to get these jobs. There are plenty of people that want to work in the disability field. Let's make sure we do everything possible to provide these opportunities for Australians to get these jobs.

DAN CONIFER: Just lastly (inaudible) the Productivity Commission reinforcing the quality of the plans being substandard. And they're even saying this morning that the planning process has been literally traumatic for some people with psychosocial disabilities. Just on that point, the fact that this is causing trauma for some people?

JENNY MACKLIN: It is a serious concern and I've heard it a lot. Of course there were very serious issues raised on 7:30 last night on the ABC with families saying how difficult this has been for them. Yes, it's true for people with psychosocial issues but it's also true for people with other disabilities and it's not good enough. It is not good enough. We have to make sure that the plans are of high quality. This is driven by there not being enough staff in the National Disability Insurance Agency. They do have to meet the demands of people who want to come into the scheme, that is a good thing. But to have good plans there needs to be enough well-trained staff. So the Government needs to lift the cap that they imposed on the staffing for the National Disability Insurance Agency.

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