THE ROAD TO THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS)

This fact sheet outlines all of the big events which led to the creation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

1975 – The national accident compensation and rehabilitation scheme
Soon after coming to government in 1972, the then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam commissioned an inquiry into a national accident compensation and rehabilitation scheme. It recommended a system of no-fault compensation for all injuries – extending beyond the then present coverage of workers’ compensation and motor accidents to cover anyone with an injury, whether acquired or from birth, and those with incapacity due to illness. The proposal was for these people to receive a proportion of their previous earnings and have access to rehabilitation services. Legislation for a scheme covering acquired injuries was before parliament when the Whitlam government was dismissed in 1975 and it was abandoned by the incoming government. Nearly 40 years passed before the issues were addressed again.

2008 – The 2020 Summit
In 2008 the idea of a new type of disability support system was presented to the Federal Government at the Australia 2020 Summit. The 2020 Summit was a convention held in Canberra to gather prominent Australians together to ‘help shape a long term strategy for the nation’s future’.

2009 – Shut Out
In 2009 the National Disability and Carer Council, advising then Minister Jenny Macklin and then Parliamentary Secretary Bill Shorten released Shut Out: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia.

The Shut Out report recorded the desperation of people with disabilities and their families, highlighting their demand for equality and a better quality of life. The following quote from Shut Out highlights this desperation:

“Once shut in, many people with disabilities now find themselves shut out. People with disabilities may be present in our community, but too few are actually part of it.”
2009 – Disability Investment Group (DIG)
In 2008 a group of important Australians with a great deal of experience and knowledge in philanthropic investment was put together. They were asked to explore innovative funding ideas that would help people with disability and their families access greater support and plan for the future. This group was known as the Disability Investment Group (DIG).

In 2009 the DIG report called The Way Forward: A New Disability Policy Framework for Australia was released. The report made six recommendations, with the main recommendation being that a feasibility study into a National Disability Insurance Scheme for Australia should be conducted.

The Productivity Commission Inquiry
The Shut Out report, combined with the recommendations of the Disability Investment Group report, provided the evidence needed to encourage the Federal Government to investigate disability support in Australia very seriously. As a result, the Productivity Commission, an independent Commonwealth agency and one of the Federal Governments review and advisory bodies, was asked to undertake an Inquiry into whether an NDIS was achievable.

This resulted in the Productivity Commission writing a report in 2010 that famously stated that the disability support system in Australia was: “…unfair, underfunded and fragmented”.

The Productivity Commission also found that the economic benefits of “…the NDIS would significantly exceed the additional costs of the scheme.”

Importantly the Productivity Commission determined that leaving the disability support scheme in Australia alone and not introducing the NDIS would create far greater costs to the community over the long run as compared to implementing the NDIS.

2009 – National Disability and Carer Alliance
Also in 2009, the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO), National Disability Services (NDS), and Carers Australia formed the National Disability and Carer Alliance. The purpose of the Alliance was to provide a single voice to pursue the structural and systemic changes necessary to transform the lives of people with a disability, their families and carers in Australia.

2010 – Every Australian Counts campaign
In 2010 the National Disability and Carer Alliance launched the Every Australian Counts campaign, successfully engaging with the wider Australian community with the primary goal of gathering support for a new type of disability support, known as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

2012 – The NDIS Act
After years of research, grassroots campaigning and political lobbying, the framework for the NDIS was introduced to Parliament in 2012 and the first NDIS office opened in 2013.