



I am writing this editorial on 1 July 2013. This is a very special day for people with a disability, their carers and families and indeed all Australians. For me it is day of reflection, hope and optimism.

From today, Australia's current support system for people with disability will be progressively replaced with DisabilityCare Australia funded by State and Commonwealth Governments.

As you know, DisabilityCare Australia is the national disability insurance scheme. Today DisabilityCare Australia begins in Tasmania for young people aged 15-24, in South Australia for children aged 0-14, and in the Barwon area of Victoria and, of particular interest to us, in the Hunter area in NSW for people up to age 65.

From 1 July 2014, DisabilityCare Australia will commence across the ACT, and the Barkly region of Northern Territory. Roll out of the full scheme in these states and territories, as well as Queensland,

will commence progressively from July 2016.

From July 2016, DisabilityCare Australia will progressively roll out in NSW and by July 2018, all eligible residents will be covered.

It is not my intention to detail eligibility, age, residence or disability requirements for DisabilityCare supports in this editorial. (For detailed up-to-date information the best source is the official website www.disabilitycareaustralia.gov.au, or you can call Carers NSW on 1800 242 636, a free call.) Rather, I want to thank all those people who brought DisabilityCare into being and who demonstrated to all of us that by working together with persistence, respect, and a strong commitment to social justice and human rights, Australians can achieve great things.

On behalf of Carers NSW, our Board, staff and volunteers, I want to acknowledge those people from so many different sectors of our community who recognised the inequities in our system of support for people with disability, their families and carers and did something about it.

To all who played a part in bringing DisabilityCare about, our deepest thanks.

It is always dangerous to single out a few people for thanks when so many people worked so hard, but I'll risk it!

Thank you Bruce Bonyhady who in 2006, when he initiated this historic journey to DisabilityCare, was Chairman of disability service provider Yooralla, and is now the Chairman of the Board of DisabilityCare.

Thank you to the members of the Disability Investment Group, including John Walsh and Allan Fels, who began building the economic case for the scheme, examining the potential gains from increased workforce participation, and the savings to future support costs

that could be made by investing in people's lives.

Thank you to those politicians of all parties who publically supported the scheme and passed the legislation.

Thank you to the members of the Productivity Commission. The Commission published its report in August 2011, identifying the existing arrangements as "underfunded, unfair, fragmented and inefficient."

"They provide no certainty that people will be able to access appropriate supports when needed," presiding commissioner Patricia Scott, and John Walsh, who worked on the inquiry as an associate commissioner, wrote.

The commissioners concluded the economic benefits of a national disability insurance scheme would far outweigh the costs.

Thank you to Rhonda Galbally, and other strong and courageous advocates for people with a disability. And of course, thank you to all those carers whose stories of the difficulties they faced in trying to get adequate services for the people for whom they cared moved and inspired the spirit of reform.

We have a long way to go. Any reform this large, this ambitious, will take time to roll out, be tested, evolve and improve. We know that. But today a start has been made.

Laraine Toms
President