



Media Release

Friday 30 July 2010

The first steps for Australians with disabilities

Yooralla and Scope welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement of additional early intervention funding to children with disabilities.

The Better Start for Children with Disability Initiative ensures children with a disability have greater access to intensive early intervention therapies and services to give them the best possible start in life.

More than 7000 children diagnosed with cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome or vision or hearing impairments will now be eligible to receive up to \$12,000 for early intervention services including speech pathology, occupational therapy, audiology or physiotherapy.

A further 20,000 children a year under the age of 13 will be eligible for Medicare rebates for up to 20 allied health professional visits per year.

Yooralla CEO, Sanjib Roy, said that the best way to meet the needs of people with a disability is through a National Disability Insurance Scheme.

"The best way to ensure people with a disability and their families are able to access the essential supports needed to live their life is through a sustainable National Disability Insurance Scheme", said Sanjib Roy.

Yooralla and Scope are delighted with the Federal Labor Government announcement of a 10 year national plan for disability. This is an important first step to addressing the fractured and crisis-driven disability system across Australia.

Scope CEO, Diana Heggie, said that children living with a disability require early intervention services to reach their potential to live their life.

"Children with a disability need services early in their life to give them the best chance to learn the skills to participate in Australian life. With these services children will be given a better opportunity to achieve their potential to live a full life", said Diana Heggie.

Scope and Yooralla believe that the best way to meet the needs of people with a disability is through a National Disability Insurance Scheme.

There are more than 1.5 million Australians with a disability which has a significant impact on their daily life, and more than 600,000 Australians providing unpaid care.

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Additional information

The *Better Start for Children with a Disability* initiative offers up to \$12,000 in funding for early intervention services for children under six with sight and hearing impairment, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome or Fragile X syndrome. Early intervention is critical for improving long term outcomes of children with disabilities as there is a limited window of opportunity when optimum results can be achieved from comparatively modest investment.

Additionally, children under 13 with listed disabilities will have improved access to new Medicare services in four allied health areas. This promise will significantly help another 20,000 children aged 7-12 in addition to the 7,880 children in the 0-6 age range.

People with disabilities need improved access to supported accommodation services. \$60 million capital works funding is promised for providers who have secured recurrent funding to meet ongoing care costs. This promise should deliver an additional 150 places. Expansion of supported accommodation is an important interim measure to build capacity and reduce priority need prior to the introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme.