



Senator the Hon Jan McLucas
Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers

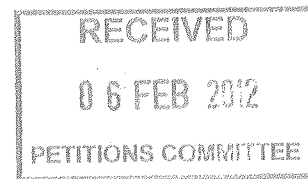
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MC11-014009

02 FEB 2012

The Hon John Murphy MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
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Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of 24 November 2011 on behalf of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions about the Better Start for Children with Disability (Better Start) initiative petition presented by the Member for Adelaide, the Hon Kate Ellis MP, on 24 November 2011 and signed by 2,261 citizens.

On 28 July 2010, the Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, announced new funding to improve access to early intervention therapies for eligible children with disabilities that affect their development.

Under the Better Start initiative, Down Syndrome, cerebral palsy, Fragile X Syndrome and moderate or greater vision or hearing impairments, including deafblindness, are the identified disabilities.

The Australian Government recognises there are other conditions that may benefit from early intervention. I asked the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to seek expert advice about evidence for early intervention in relation to other types of childhood disability and developmental delay, including an analysis of current research. On 20 December 2011 I released a review of evidence for the effectiveness of early intervention for children with a range of developmental disabilities. The review, which was undertaken by KPMG, can be accessed at: http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/pubs/policy/early_intervention_review/Pages/default.aspx. Along with the planned evaluation of the Better Start initiative, this will help inform the future direction of the program, including consideration of extending it more broadly.

The Better Start initiative is not intended to replace or reduce specialised disability support services that are provided in each jurisdiction. State and territory governments are the main providers of disability services in their respective jurisdictions and provide access to a wide range of services for children with disability and their families and carers.

We have made good progress in the early design and development of a National Disability Insurance Scheme since the Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, released the Productivity Commission's final report into care and support for people with disability on 10 August 2011.

All governments have agreed to lay the foundations for a National Disability Insurance Scheme by mid-2013 – a year ahead of the timetable set out by the Productivity Commission.

On 3 December 2011, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of a dedicated agency to guide the development of a National Disability Insurance Scheme. This agency will lead the detailed design work for the launch of a scheme and will develop the practical plan for how we deliver this significant reform. This will be supported with an additional \$10 million for projects to examine how the design elements of a scheme will work in practice.

The Government is committed to delivering a National Disability Insurance Scheme, and to making sure that people with disability, their families, carers, advocates and those who provide services are at the centre of this reform. For more information, visit the NDIS website at www.ndis.gov.au.

Thank you again for writing on behalf of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions.

Yours sincerely

JAN MCLUCAS