

The Senate

Community Affairs
Legislation Committee

Social Services Legislation Amendment
(Transition Mobility Allowance to the
National Disability Insurance Scheme) Bill
2016 [Provisions]

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45th Parliament

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ABBREVIATIONS

Bill	Social Services Legislation Amendment (Transition Mobility Allowance to the National Disability Insurance Scheme) Bill 2016
CYDA	Children and Young People with Disability Australia
department	Department of Social Services
DES	Disability Employment Services
Minister	Minister for Social Services
NCOSS	New South Wales Council of Social Service
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NWRN	National Welfare Rights Network
PACE	Positive Action towards Career Engagement
PJHCR	Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights
PWDA	People With Disability Australia
PwDWA	People with Disabilities Western Australia
QAI	Queensland Advocacy Incorporated

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

2.42 The committee recommends that the Bill be passed.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose and background

1.1 The Social Services Legislation Amendment (Transition Mobility Allowance to the National Disability Insurance Scheme) Bill 2016 (the Bill) seeks to implement a 2016-17 Budget measure to support the transition of the mobility allowance to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).¹ In March 2013, the then Government identified the mobility allowance as one of 17 Commonwealth programs that would transition to the NDIS.²

1.2 The mobility allowance is a payment available to eligible people with disability, illness or injury who cannot use public transport without substantial assistance and who participate in 'approved activities'. This includes travel to and from home to paid work, voluntary work, study or training or to look for work. Recipients of NDIS funding packages are not eligible for the mobility allowance.³

1.3 The Bill aims to transition the mobility allowance to the NDIS by:

- changing the qualification criteria for mobility allowance from 1 January 2017 consistent with the criteria for the NDIS; and
- ceasing the mobility allowance from 1 July 2020 to ensure the NDIS is the main source of support for people with disability who need assistance to enable them to engage in the workplace and other economic activities.⁴

Key provisions

1.4 The Bill is comprised of one schedule proposing amendments to the following legislation:

- *Social Security Act 1991*;
- *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999*;
- *Farm Household Support Act 2014*;
- *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997*; and
- *National Disability Insurance Scheme Legislation Amendment Act 2013*.

1 Budget 2016-17, *Budget Measures – Budget Paper No. 2*, 3 May 2016, p. 142, http://budget.gov.au/2016-17/content/bp2/html/bp2_expense-21.htm (accessed 19 October 2016).

2 Department of Social Services (DSS), *Submission 8*, p. 4.

3 Department of Human Services, Mobility Allowance, <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/mobility-allowance> (accessed 19 October 2016).

4 Explanatory Memorandum (EM), p. 1.

1.5 The proposed measures are expected to cost \$46.5 million over the forward estimates.⁵

Part 1 – Amendments of mobility allowance provisions

1.6 Part 1 seeks to amend the qualification criteria for mobility allowance from 1 January 2017. These changes would bring the criteria in line with qualification criteria for the NDIS. The key changes to the criteria are listed in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1 – Summary of proposed changes

Changes to mobility allowance criteria		
	Current	Proposed
Definition of eligible person	A 'handicapped person' defined as someone who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a physical or mental disability; and • has turned 16.⁶ 	A person who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a physical or mental disability and the Secretary is of the opinion that the disability is either permanent or likely to last for at least 12 months; and • be at least 16 and under 65 years of age.⁷
Qualifying activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gainful employment • Vocational training • Job search activities • Voluntary work • Vocational rehabilitation program.⁸ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gainful employment • Vocational training
Continuation period	12 week continuation period, provided requirements met. ⁹	4 week continuation period. ¹⁰
Allowance advance	Available on request, provided requirements met. ¹¹	No allowance advance. ¹²
Transition to NDIS	Ineligible if receiving NDIS funding package.	Ineligible if receiving NDIS funding package. Individuals who transition to the NDIS but subsequently cease to

5 EM, p. 1.

6 The Bill proposes repealing the current definition of 'handicapped person' in the *Social Security Act 1991*, Part 2.21, <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2016C00929> (accessed 19 October 2016).

7 EM, p. 1.

8 *Social Security Act 1991*, Part 2.21, Division 1, section 1035 (2).

9 *Social Security Act 1991*, Part 2.21, Division 4, section 1046.

10 EM, Item 34, p. 4.

11 *Social Security Act 1991*, Part 2.21, Division 3, section 1045.

12 EM, Item 26, p. 5.

		be NDIS participants will be also be ineligible.
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Part 2 – Cessation of mobility allowance

1.7 Part 2 seeks to cease the mobility allowance from 1 July 2020.¹³

Consideration by other committees

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights

1.8 The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (PJCHR) raised concerns about the compatibility of the Bill with the right to equality and non-discrimination on the basis of age. The PJCHR sought advice from the Minister of Social Services (Minister) on:

- whether the 'continuity of support' arrangements for existing recipients of mobility allowance provides for the same level of support as that existing under the current allowance; and
- whether there is comparable assistance under the aged care system for persons aged 65 and older to participate in work and other approved activities (given there may be persons who are not currently receiving the allowance and who, if the program were not closed, would otherwise be eligible to receive mobility allowance).¹⁴

1.9 The PJCHR had not considered a response from the Minister at the time of the tabling of this report.

Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills

1.10 The Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills had no comment on the Bill.¹⁵

Conduct of the inquiry

1.11 The provisions of the Bill were referred to the committee on 13 October 2016 for inquiry and report by 21 November 2016.¹⁶ On 21 November 2016, the Senate agreed to extend the reporting date to 23 November 2016,¹⁷ and subsequently to 24 November 2016.¹⁸ The proposals to refer the Bill requested that the committee consider:

- impacts of the abolition of the mobility allowance in 2020;

13 EM, p. 2.

14 Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (PJCHR), *Human rights scrutiny report: report 8 of 2016*, 9 November 2016, pp 10 – 11.

15 Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills, *Alert Digest 8/16*, 9 November 2016, p. 49

16 Journals of the Senate, *No. 11–13 October 2016*, p. 326.

17 Journals of the Senate, *No. 16–21 November 2016*, p. 494.

18 Journals of the Senate, *No. 18–23 November 2016*, p. 580.

- implications for current mobility allowance recipients after they transition off the payment in 2020; and
- impacts on people with disability.¹⁹

1.12 Details of the inquiry, including a link to the Bill and associated documents, were placed on the committee's website.²⁰ The committee wrote to 70 organisations and individuals inviting submissions by 4 November 2016. Submissions continued to be accepted after that date.

1.13 The committee received 21 submissions to the inquiry and held a public hearing in Canberra on 21 November 2016. Submitters and witnesses are listed at Appendices 1 and 2.

1.14 The committee thanks those organisations and individuals that made submissions to the inquiry and gave evidence at its public hearing.

19 Senate Standing Committee for Selection of Bills, *Report No. 7 of 2016*, Appendices 8 and 9.

20 See: Community Affairs Legislation Committee, http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/MobilityAllowance (accessed 22 November 2016).

Chapter 2

Key issues

2.1 Submitters to this inquiry expressed concern that the measures proposed in the Bill may create a gap in service provision for people who rely on the mobility allowance to find and maintain employment. The Minister for Social Services (Minister), the Hon Christian Porter MP, stated that there are currently around 60 000 mobility allowance recipients.¹

2.2 The key concerns raised by submitters relate to:

- lack of detail about 'continuity of support arrangements' for current mobility allowance recipients who would be ineligible for the NDIS;
- supports available to those people who will be ineligible for continuity of support arrangements and unable to access the NDIS;
- ensuring equity of support for people who transition to the NDIS;
- limiting the types of qualifying activities;
- changing the continuation period from 12 to 4 weeks; and
- removing the advance allowance.

2.3 The Department of Social Services (department) submitted that the Bill is intended to:

... support the transition of Mobility Allowance funding to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and to ensure that the NDIS is the main program of support for people with a disability who need assistance to enable them to fully engage in the workforce and other economic activities.²

Continuity of support arrangements

2.4 The key concern raised by most submitters was the lack of detail about 'continuity of support arrangements' for current mobility allowance recipients who do not transition to the NDIS once the mobility allowance ceases on 1 July 2020. Submitters expressed concern that while the Minister acknowledged these people would receive 'continuity of support arrangements', there is limited further detail available.³ For example, Inclusion Australia highlighted that the lack of detail on the

1 The Hon Christian Porter, Minister for Social Services, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 13 October 2016, p. 7.

2 Department of Social Services (DSS), *Submission 8*, p. 2.

3 See: National Welfare Rights Network, *Submission 10*, p. 5; Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association of NSW, *Submission 2*, p. 3; Australian Network on Disability, *Submission 4*, p. 2; Children and Young People with Disability Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 6; Australian Blindness Forum, *Submission 9*, p. 7; People with Disability Australia, *Submission 20*, p. 9.

arrangements is causing concern for people with intellectual disability and their families:

... with the real fear that they will 'fall between the cracks' with the Commonwealth and States each expecting each other to provide the necessary transport support funding.⁴

2.5 A number of submitters representing people with vision impairment expressed concern about the lack of detail on continuity of support arrangements for people aged over 65 who would not be eligible for the NDIS, especially the 75 per cent of people over 65 who are blind or have vision impairment.⁵ For example, Blind Citizens Australia submitted that:

The mobility allowance has played a key role in enabling people who have not had the opportunity to be employed to pursue meaningful activities, and to make invaluable contributions to their communities. The removal of the mobility allowance could well prevent people in this situation, (of whom there are many), to cease making such contributions due to the costs involved.⁶

2.6 These submitters recommended that the government provide clarity and detail about how the continuity of support arrangements would operate.⁷

2.7 The department submitted that evidence from the NDIS trial sites suggests that around 30 per cent of current mobility allowance recipients would not be eligible for an NDIS package of support. This includes 4 000 recipients aged over 65 years old, and 14 000 aged under 65 years old.⁸

2.8 The department confirmed that people aged over 65 who are currently receiving Mobility Allowance and who will be ineligible for the NDIS 'will be provided with continuity of support, which will initially be provided through the Mobility Allowance program, pending finalisation of long-term arrangements'.⁹ The department further noted that 'consideration is currently being given' to the continuity of support arrangements that will apply to people ineligible to enter the NDIS.¹⁰

2.9 Representatives from the department told the committee that the decision about long-term continuity of support arrangements would be finalised once more data

4 Inclusion Australia, *Submission 17*, p. 4.

5 See: Spinal Cord Injuries Australia, *Submission 1*, p. 1; Vision Australia, *Submission 6*, p. 5; Australian Blindness Forum, *Submission 9*, p. 1; Royal Society for the Blind, *Submission 11*, p. 1; Blind Citizens WA, *Submission 16*, p. 1; Blind Citizens Australia, *Submission 7*, p. 4; Macular Disease Foundation Australia, *Submission 13*, p. 2; Name withheld, *Submission 19*, p. 2.

6 Blind Citizens Australia, *Submission 7*, p. 4.

7 NCOSS, *Submission 3*, p. 2; Australian Blindness Forum, *Submission 9*, p. 1.

8 DSS, *Submission 8*, p. 5.

9 DSS, *Submission 8*, p. 4.

10 DSS, *Submission 8*, p. 5.

is collected about the needs of people transitioning to the NDIS, consistent with the Australian Government's commitment to provide continuity of support arrangements for people aged over 65 years:

There has been no decision taken yet on what the detail of the long-term arrangements are, so, therefore, we have not consulted or figured out a process to do that yet. That is partly because it is such early days and we want to allow time. Governments have made a decision, firstly, but it will give us a bit more time to look at what the pattern is and actually do better calculations on the number of people across a range of current Commonwealth programs that will require continuity of support ... The data that we have currently—for example, for mobility allowance—are only estimates, so until we see people test their eligibility or seek to apply for the NDIS we will not really know.¹¹

People ineligible for continuity of support arrangements

2.10 Submitters expressed particular concern about the lack of provision for mobility allowance to be made available to people who acquire blindness or vision impairment after 65 years of age and who would not be covered by any continuity of support arrangements available to current mobility allowance recipients.¹² Mr Bruce Maguire from Vision Australia told the committee of the importance of supports, such as the mobility allowance, in assisting people aged over 65 to participate in community activities:

... the acquisition of blindness or vision loss is almost always a very traumatic and distressing event, and for people over 65 who become blind or acquire vision loss the opportunity again to feel that they are getting back into the community—either through paid employment, through training or through volunteering—is a huge part of the rehabilitation and recovery process, and of the reclamation of a sense of dignity and self-worth.¹³

2.11 Submitters also expressed concern that people who are blind or have vision impairment and who may be eligible for the NDIS face barriers to accessing NDIS support, such as lack of information and documentation in accessible formats such as braille, large print and e-text.¹⁴ Vision Australia submitted:

There must therefore be a recognition that not all people who are blind or have low vision are able to participate in the NDIS, even though they are eligible to do so. This non-participation is through no fault of their own, but results from barriers that could and should be removed, and which so far remain largely unaddressed. People should not be disadvantaged if they are unable to participate in the NDIS because of a systemic failure to provide

11 Ms Helen McDevitt, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2016, p. 18.

12 See: Vision Australia, *Submission 6*, p. 5; Australian Blindness Forum, *Submission 9*, p. 1; Royal Society for the Blind, *Submission 11*, p. 1; Blind Citizens WA, *Submission 16*, p. 1; Vision 2020, *Submission 21*, pp 1–2.

13 Mr Bruce Maguire, Vision Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2016, p. 11.

14 Blind Citizens Australia, *Submission 7*, p. 4.

necessary information and documentation in formats that people who are blind or have low vision require.¹⁵

2.12 These submitters recommended that the mobility allowance remain in place for people who are ineligible for the NDIS, choose not to participate in the NDIS, or who face barriers in accessing the NDIS.¹⁶

2.13 The department noted that individuals who would be ineligible for continuity of support arrangements or the NDIS would have access to a range of other supports, including:

- GST exempt purchase of cars for work use, where the individual has a disability affecting them to the extent they cannot use public transport;
- the Employment Assistance Fund, providing financial assistance for people with disability or their workforce modification equipment or services;
- Employment services, through jobactive, Disability Employment Services and the Community Development Program assisting job seekers (including those with disability) become job ready and find work, including through providing wage subsidies;
- Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support Program, providing wage and mentoring support for the employers hiring apprentices and trainees with disability; and
- State and territory transport, vehicle modification and parking subsidies.¹⁷

2.14 Representatives from the department told the committee that in addition to these supports, Commonwealth, state and territory governments have agreed to:

... work in a much more focused way to ensure that universal services and other supports are providing the supports and access, as they are obliged and are meant to do, for people with disability. That includes other Commonwealth services and systems as well as state governments.¹⁸

Equity of funding under the NDIS

2.15 Submitters expressed concern that recipients of the mobility allowance who are eligible for the NDIS may be 'worse off' and receive less transport support when they transition to the NDIS.¹⁹ For example, the NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) submitted that the proposed rates of transport support offered under the NDIS are 'manifestly inadequate compared to the transport costs faced by many people with disability'.²⁰

15 Vision Australia, *Submission 6*, p. 3.

16 Inclusion Australia, *Submission 17*, p. 3; Vision Australia, *Submission 6*, p. 3.

17 DSS, *Submission 8*, p. 4.

18 Ms Helen McDevitt, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2016, p. 20.

19 NCOSS, *Submission 3*, p. 3; Queensland Advocacy Incorporated, *Submission 12*, p. 5; Inclusion Australia, *Submission 17*, p. 3.

20 NCOSS, *Submission 3*, p. 3.

2.16 Some submitters also expressed concern about the level of funding for transport support under the NDIS, and the way it has been implemented at trial sites.²¹ People with Disability Australia submitted that:

Feedback we have received is that during the planning process, planners are not encouraging participants to include transport assistance or do not adequately calculate the level of transport support needed.²²

2.17 Submitters also highlighted that the current rates of mobility allowance and NDIS transport support do not cover the real cost of transport for people with disability, who rely on additional supplements from state and territory based taxi subsidy schemes. These submitters expressed concern that some state and territory taxi subsidy schemes are changing their eligibility to exclude NDIS participants, which may result in a funding shortfall.²³

2.18 **Table 2.1** outlines the current rates of mobility allowance and relevant eligibility criteria. **Table 2.2** outlines the expected levels of transport support under the NDIS.

Table 2.1 – Current rates of mobility allowance

Rates	Per fortnight	Per year (approx.)	Eligibility
Standard rate	\$93.20	\$2400	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do paid or voluntary work, are self-employed, undertake vocational training or independent living or life skills training, or any combination of these for at least 32 hours every 4 weeks on a continuing basis • Look for work under an agreement with an Employment Services Provider • Participate in a Disability Management Service program with a Disability Employment Services provider, or • Get Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance or Austudy and meet the Mutual Obligation Requirements

21 VALID, representing people with intellectual disability in Victoria, submitted that evidence from the Barwon NDIS trial site indicates that rates of transport assistance is not appropriate, and that in some case participants 'ran out of their allocated transport budgets within 6 months, pressuring them to either reduce community participation that requires travel or to rely on families and other forms of private transport to meet the gap'. VALID, *Submission 18*, p. 2. See also: People with Disability Australia, *Submission 20*, p. 7; People with Disability WA, *Submission 15*, pp 2–4; Inclusion Australia, *Submission 17*, p. 7; People with Disability Australia, *Submission 20*, p. 7

22 People with Disability Australia, *Submission 20*, p. 10.

23 Children and Young People with Disability Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 7; Inclusion Australia, *Submission 17*, p. 5, VALID, *Submission 18*, p. 3.

Higher rate	\$130.30	\$3400	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get Disability Support Pension, Parenting Payment, Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance as a job seeker, and • Work for 15 hours or more a week on wages that are at, or above, the relevant minimum wage, or • Work for 15 hours or more a week on productivity based wages under the Supported Wage System, or • Look for work 15 hours or more a week under an agreement with an Employment Services Provider
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Source: Department of Human Services, *Mobility Allowance – Payment rates*, <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/mobility-allowance> (accessed 15 November 2016).

Table 2.2 – Expected levels of transport support under the NDIS

Level	Per year	Eligibility
Level 1	Up to \$1,750	Participants who are not working, studying or attending day programs but are seeking to enhance their community access.
Level 2	Up to \$2,625	Participants who are currently working or studying part-time (up to 15 hours a week), participating in day programs and for other social, recreational or leisure activities.
Level 3	Up to \$3,456	Participants who are currently working, looking for work, or studying, at least 15 hours a week, and are unable to use public transport because of their disability.
Exceptional circumstances		Participants can receive higher funding if the participant has supports (mainstream, informal or funded) in their plan that enables their participation in employment.

Source: NDIS, *Participant transport funding information*, <https://www.ndis.gov.au/document/participant-transport-funding-informati.html> (accessed 15 November 2016).

2.19 Representatives from the department told the committee that the criteria and levels of transport support under the NDIS are 'broadly aligned' with mobility allowance. The department emphasised that where transport funding is deemed to be 'reasonable and necessary', the eligibility criteria under the NDIS is similar, and in some cases 'more generous' than mobility allowance:

In relation to NDIS and transport funding, like all participants plans, it is based on an individualised funding package and what is reasonable and necessary for that individual. What the NDIS has broadly done as a form of guidance is determine some general levels of types of transport support that it would provide. They are broadly aligned—they are certainly consistent—

with, if not slightly more generous than, current mobility allowance provisions.²⁴

2.20 The department also noted that under the NDIS, participants would have more flexibility to adjust their levels of transport support to suit their needs:

... once a participant's package is approved and it may have a component for transport in that, the participant then has flexibility about how they use the funding in their package. So, if they had a particular need at a particular time, they could actually draw on the funding in their package to pay more for transport or less for transport. So it is quite flexible in that regard.²⁵

Changes to qualifying activities

2.21 Some submitters expressed concern about the proposed removal of volunteering, job search activities and vocational rehabilitation activities from the list of qualifying activities for mobility allowance.²⁶ NCOSS highlighted that, in particular, volunteering and job search activities:

... play an important role in preparing people with disability for economic and workforce participation, particularly given that people with disability are almost twice as likely than the general population to be unemployed.²⁷

2.22 These submitters recommended that the current list of qualifying activities for mobility allowance be maintained.²⁸

2.23 National Disability Services expressed particular concern about the impact on people accessing the Disability Employment Services (DES) program, 'which assists people with disability to gain and maintain employment in mainstream workplaces'.²⁹ Similarly, the Australian Network on Disability noted that it was not clear how the change in eligibility would impact on a person participating in its Positive Action towards Career Engagement (PACE) program which is neither paid employment or vocational training, but 'clearly provide pathways to employment'.³⁰

2.24 The Minister stated when introducing the Bill that under current arrangements:

... Mobility Allowance is a very broad program which is not particularly well targeted. The payment has not led to any significant increase in the workforce participation of recipients. This is partly because, despite its

24 Ms Helen McDevitt, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2016, pp 20–21.

25 Ms Helen McDevitt, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2016, p. 21.

26 NCOSS, *Submission 3*, p. 1; Australian Network on Disability, *Submission 4*, p. 2; Queensland Advocacy Incorporated, *Submission 12*, p. 4; Inclusion Australia, *Submission 17*, p. 4.

27 NCOSS, *Submission 3*, p. 1.

28 NCOSS, *Submission 3*, p. 2; Children and Young People with Disability Australia, *Submission 14*, pp 6–7; Queensland Advocacy Incorporated, *Submission 12*, p. 4.

29 NDS, *Submission 5*, p. 1.

30 Australian Network on Disability, *Submission 4*, p. 2.

policy objectives, there is no requirement for Mobility Allowance payments to actually be spent on transport needs or in ways that directly assist a recipient's workforce participation.³¹

2.25 The department noted that of current mobility allowance recipients, the majority are engaged in employment: 79 per cent in employment, 7 per cent in job search activities and 11 per cent in volunteering roles.³²

2.26 Representatives from the department told the committee that the proposed change in qualifying activities intends to more closely align mobility allowance with:

... its original purpose, which is to support the person in an activity that will further their chances of getting work around training or actually working.³³

Continuation period

2.27 Under the current arrangements, a person who is qualified for mobility allowance can receive a 12 week 'continuation period', during which they may continue to receive a payment while not participating in a qualifying activity.³⁴

2.28 A number of submitters expressed concern about the reduction of the continuation period from 12 weeks to 4 weeks, and recommended that the 12 week continuation period be maintained.³⁵

2.29 In particular, submitters highlighted that people who are blind or have vision impairment would be adversely affected by the change, as they generally take longer to find work.³⁶ These submitters noted Vision Australia research that indicates that people who are blind or have vision impairment already have high rates of unemployment (around 58 per cent). The Australian Blindness Forum suggested that anecdotally the percentage may be around 70 per cent unemployment and highlights:

... the need to ensure people who are blind or vision impaired and who are in paid employment (or a qualifying activity) are provided as much support as possible to continue in that employment ... To lose the Mobility Allowance after only 4 weeks of not being engaged in a qualifying activity

31 The Hon Christian Porter, Minister for Social Services, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 13 October 2016, p. 7.

32 Ms Cath Halbert, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2016, p. 20.

33 Ms Cath Halbert, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2016, p. 21.

34 DSS, *Submission 8*, p. 3.

35 NCOSS, *Submission 3*, p. 2; Queensland Advocacy Incorporated, *Submission 12*, p. 7; Australian Blindness Forum, *Submission 9*, p. 1; Royal Society for the Blind, *Submission 11*, p. 2; Inclusion Australia, *Submission 17*, p. 4; People with Disability Australia, *Submission 20*, p. 9.

36 Vision Australia, *Submission 6*, p. 4; Australian Blindness Forum, *Submission 9*, p. 3; Royal Society for the Blind, *Submission 11*, p. 2; Blind Citizens WA, *Submission 16*, p. 3.

will have an enormous impact on an individual's ability to continue to find work.³⁷

2.30 The department submitted that under current arrangements:

The existence of the 12 week continuation period has not led to any appreciable increase in the level of workforce participation of Mobility Allowance recipients.³⁸

2.31 Representatives from the department further noted that:

... the assumption underpinning the change is not that there are going to be fewer people having a grace period; it is just that people will only be paid for fewer weeks. The assumption is that it is not mak[ing] a big difference to whether people reconnect with another activity at the moment, so the numbers will be the same but, instead of getting paid for 12 weeks while not undertaking an activity, they will get paid for only four weeks while not undertaking an activity.³⁹

Mobility allowance advance

2.32 Under current arrangements, recipients of mobility allowance may qualify for the mobility allowance advance if the Secretary of the department is satisfied that the person will continue to be qualified for mobility allowance for at least 26 weeks.⁴⁰ The National Welfare Rights Network (NWRN) supported retaining the 6 month mobility allowance advance.⁴¹ NWRN suggested:

... there is merit in exploring this as an option for the NDIS scheme, if not available. The ability to access funding in advance may help achieve the NDIS' wider goals, including individual choice and control, by giving the individual more ability to bargain with providers to meet their transport needs at the lowest cost.⁴²

2.33 The department submitted that the mobility allowance advance:

... is intended to assist recipients with any large or upfront transport-related costs associated with undertaking qualifying activities. Unlike advances for other income support and family assistance payments, the Mobility Allowance advance is not intended to be used for general costs of living expenses and is not made on the basis of hardship. There is no assessment made of a person's ability to pay back the advance and there is no discretion to change the rate of repayment.⁴³

37 Australian Blindness Forum, *Submission 9*, pp 4–5.

38 DSS, *Submission 8*, p. 2.

39 Ms Cath Halbert, *Committee Hansard*, 21 November 2016, p. 23.

40 DSS, *Submission 8*, p. 3.

41 NWRN, *Submission 10*, p. 6.

42 NWRN, *Submission 10*, p. 6.

43 DSS, *Submission 8*, p. 3.

2.34 The department further noted 'hardship is unlikely to be an issue' as a result of the removal of the allowance, given that:

90 per cent of Mobility Allowance recipients are also receiving another income support payment and will continue to have access to advance payments under their primary payment. The remaining 10 per cent have other means of support which preclude them from receiving a means-tested income support payment ...⁴⁴

Committee view

2.35 The committee acknowledges concerns about the lack of detail on long-term continuity of support arrangements for current mobility allowance recipients. The committee notes that the department is working to develop long-term arrangements, consistent with the Australian Government's commitment to provide continuity of support for people aged over 65 years of age.

2.36 The committee acknowledges the particular concerns about what supports will be available to people aged over 65 who will not be eligible for the NDIS, particularly those people who are blind or have vision impairment, once the mobility allowance ceases on 1 July 2020. The committee is satisfied that there are a number of programs available at the Commonwealth and state level to continue to assist these individuals.

2.37 The committee acknowledges concerns from some submitters about the level of funding available for transport support under the NDIS. The committee notes that the criteria and funding levels between the NDIS and mobility allowance are equivalent, particularly at the higher levels.

2.38 The committee also acknowledges concerns about the proposed changes to the qualifying activities for mobility allowance. The committee agrees that these changes would realign the mobility allowance to its original purpose to support workforce participation. The committee further notes that the majority of current mobility allowance recipients are engaged in some form of employment activity.

2.39 The committee notes the support from some submitters and witnesses for maintaining the continuation period for 12 weeks. The committee acknowledges evidence from the department that there is no evidence to suggest that the current length of the continuation period results in greater workforce participation.

2.40 The committee also notes that few submitters commented on the removal of the mobility allowance advance. The committee acknowledges that this change is unlikely to result in hardship, as 90 per cent of mobility allowance recipients have access to advance payments through their income support payments.

2.41 Overall, the committee agrees that the proposed measures outlined in the Bill would better target the mobility allowance to its original purpose, and support the transition of mobility allowance to the NDIS. The committee agrees that this would help to ensure that the NDIS will be the main program of support for people with a

44 DSS, *Submission 8*, p. 3.

disability who need assistance to enable them to fully engage in the workforce and other economic activities.

Recommendation 1

2.42 The committee recommends that the Bill be passed.

Senator Jonathon Duniam

Chair

Labor Senators' Dissenting Report

1.1 Labor Senators are unclear on the need for this Bill in terms of funding support for Mobility Allowance recipients who are not eligible for the NDIS and believe further explanation is required.

1.2 While the Government has presented the Bill as investing \$46.5 million to ensure that Mobility Allowance recipients who are not eligible for the NDIS receive continuity of support, it is unclear as to why they would not receive it anyway under current legislation.

1.3 The previous Labor Government legislated to ensure that NDIS participants were no longer eligible for Mobility Allowance and this is currently the case.

1.4 This means that around 70 per cent of current recipients will transition to the NDIS, meaning that the majority of expenditure on Mobility Allowance will be returned to the Budget and can be used towards funding the NDIS.

1.5 Under current legislation, current recipients of Mobility Allowance and new claimants who meet the current eligibility criteria but are not eligible for the NDIS could continue to claim Mobility Allowance. There is no legislation other than this Bill that would cease the provision of the payment.

1.6 Labor senators are concerned that this Bill is being used as an opportunity to tighten the eligibility for the payment, which will impact on some of the most vulnerable Australians and that is not in keeping with the spirit of participation key to the NDIS.

1.7 It is not clear to Labor Senators why there is a need to provide the \$46.5 million, or to change eligibility for the current Mobility Allowance.

1.8 Labor Senators note that an explanation of this is not available from the explanatory memorandum for the Bill, the Minister's second reading speech, the Department of Social Services' submission or the 2016-17 Budget measure.

1.9 Labor Senators believe further justification for the changes to eligibility and the need for the Bill in its entirety is required.

1.10 Labor shares the Government's concern about the 30 per cent of current recipients who will not be eligible to participate in the NDIS. These are people with a disability who are unable to use public transport, and who need some assistance with the costs of specific transport in order to participate in work and community life.

1.11 In the 2013-14 Budget, Labor announced that Mobility Allowance recipients would no longer be eligible for the Allowance if they transition to the NDIS and would receive support with transport through the NDIS instead. The Labor Government also committed that current recipients not eligible for the NDIS would continue to receive the Mobility Allowance.

1.12 Labor Senators appreciate that the Government is also committed to ensure that current Mobility Allowance recipients will receive continuity of support.

1.13 However, Labor Senators are also concerned about the impact of this Bill on people into the future who are not eligible for the NDIS and who will no longer be eligible for Mobility Allowance as a result of the changes to eligibility included in this Bill.

1.14 These are people with a disability that prevents them from using public transport, who are over 65 years of age, who use transport support to participate in voluntary work or a vocational rehabilitation program, or who require support only temporarily.

1.15 Labor created the NDIS to help enable people with disability to participate in the community, including in activities other than paid work, such as volunteering. These activities are of great benefit to people's wellbeing and Labor Senators are concerned that the loss of transport assistance for those outside the NDIS could result in people being unable to participate in important activities.

1.16 Organisations that have made submissions to the Inquiry and witnesses have raised consistent concerns that Labor Senators believe require further attention. These are discussed further below.

1.17 It is important that the disability sector has consistency and stability as the roll out of the NDIS continues. Labor Senators are concerned that the hearing for this Inquiry revealed that the disability sector have not been consulted about these changes.

Key concerns

Limiting Mobility Allowance to those aged under 65

1.18 People with Disability Australia (PWDA) raised concern about the impact of this Bill on people with disabilities and related transport needs who are over the age of 65. PWDA noted the well-documented benefits of ongoing workforce participation and the increasing number of people with disabilities who are working beyond age 65.

1.19 People over 65 are not eligible for the NDIS. They will access support services through the aged care system. It is unclear how the aged care system will provide a similar support to older working people with disabilities in the absence of Mobility Allowance.¹

1.20 Organisations representing blind and vision impaired people raised particular concern about this change, as more than 75 per cent of blind or vision impaired Australians are aged over 65. This Bill would mean that blind Australians over 65 would no longer be able to access support with transport needs, with potential impacts on their ability to work and participate.²

1 People with Disability Australia, *Submission 20*.

2 Blind Citizens Australia, *Submission 7*; Blind Citizens Western Australia, *Submission 16*; Macular Disease Foundation Australia, *Submission 13*.

Removing Mobility Allowance for those undertaking voluntary work and job search activities

1.21 This Bill limits eligibility only to people who are traveling to undertake 'gainful employment' or vocational education. Recipients who wish to undertake voluntary work or vocational rehabilitation program or job search activities will no longer be able to access the payment.

1.22 Inclusion Australia has submitted that:

the proposed changes will make it more difficult for people with disability to find a job and is contrary to the expressed intention of the National Disability Strategy and the UNCRPD aimed at providing necessary supports to assist people with disability to have an equal opportunity to participate in employment.³

1.23 Additionally, Queensland Advocacy Incorporated (QAI) expressed concern about this tightening of eligibility, stating:

volunteering not only prepares people with disability for 'gainful employment' but offers social and emotional supports, relationship opportunities and a great deal of personal satisfaction and accomplishment is experienced by people contributing their time, labour, devotion, loyalty and skills to community.⁴

1.24 Labor Senators are concerned that removing these activities from the eligibility criteria is contradictory to enabling greater social and economic participation for people with disability.

1.25 Additionally, the tightening of criteria in regard to employment is not consistent with NDIS eligibility, although this is the Government's stated rationale for the eligibility changes. The NDIS does not require participants to be in paid work.

1.26 Labor Senators are concerned that the removal of the Mobility Allowance to assist with transport for purposes other than paid work will create barriers to the participation of people with disability in their communities.

Continuity of support beyond 2020

1.27 This Bill indicates that 'long-term' supports will be available to those currently receiving Mobility Allowance, who are not eligible for the NDIS, following the cessation of the payment in 2020.

1.28 However Labor Senators are concerned that more detail regarding this long term support has not been provided.

1.29 Labor Senators believe it is important that those with disability and the disability sector have certainty and stability regarding this payment in the long term.

3 Inclusion Australia, *Submission 17*.

4 Queensland Advocacy Incorporated, *Submission 12*.

1.30 Labor Senators encourage the Government to outline, in more detailed terms, the nature of the continuity of support that will be available to current recipients of the Mobility Allowance.

Transport in NDIS packages

1.31 Labor Senators note reports that NDIS packages are not adequately covering transport needs of participants. This was raised for example in the New South Wales Council of Social Service's submission.⁵

1.32 Labor notes that the intention of the NDIS is that no one should be worse off as a participant and stresses the need for the Government to ensure that plans adequately provide for the transport needs of individual participants, in accordance with the Commonwealth's commitment and that is not in keeping with the spirit of participation key to the NDIS.

Recommendation

1.33 Labor Senators on this committee recommend that further explanation of the need for the Bill, including the provision of \$46.5 million to ensure support that exists under current legislation, be provided to the Senate before a decision is formed.

Senator Sam Dastyari

Senator Murray Watt

5 New South Wales Council of Social Service, *Submission 3*.

Australian Greens Senators' Dissenting Report

Introduction

1.1 The Australian Greens have concerns about the Social Services Legislation Amendment (Transition Mobility Allowance to the National Disability Insurance Scheme) Bill 2016 (the Bill) and therefore dissent from the majority committee report.

1.2 A number of submitters identified the importance of mobility for people with disability and its continued identification as a substantial barrier to participation. The Australian Greens are concerned that measures in the Bill will lead to a decrease in economic, educational and social participation in the community, which is not in the best interests of people with disability.

1.3 Our concerns about the Bill relate to 'continuity of support arrangements' for those who do not transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), equity of support for those on or transitioning to the NDIS, the change to eligible activities, the reduction in the continuation period from 12 to 4 weeks and the removal of the allowance advance.

Continuity of support arrangements

1.4 A number of submitters raised concerns about consequences of moving the allowance into the NDIS and the lack of detail surrounding the continuity of support arrangements for those currently receiving Mobility Allowance who will be ineligible for the NDIS.

1.5 The NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) says in its submission:

Although the Minister's Second Reading Speech acknowledges continuity of support arrangements for people currently receiving the Mobility Allowance, the *Mobility Allowance Bill* provides no details about these arrangements. Indeed, the Second Reading Speech states that the Government is 'working towards' these arrangements.¹

1.6 The National Welfare Rights Network (NWRN) says in its submission:

For people aged 65 and over, the Government has indicated that they will continue to receive support through "continuity of support" arrangements. We are concerned, however, that nothing is yet known about the specifics of these arrangements or the level of support they will provide, and specifically for transport. In his second reading speech the Minister has indicated only that the Government is currently considering this.²

1.7 Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) says in its submission:

1 NSW Council of Social Services, *Submission 3*, p. 2.

2 National Welfare Rights Network, *Submission 10*, p.5.

It has been indicated that people who are not eligible for the NDIS are able to access additional funding and support through other programs, including: GST exempt purchase of cars for work; the Employment Assistance Fund; Disability Employment Services; and state and territory subsidies. However, many of these programs have specific purposes and eligibility criteria that differ from the Mobility Allowance. For example, GST exemptions for cars are only available to people who can drive and the Employment Assistance Fund specifically relates to work related modifications and services. They do not provide direct funding to assist in meeting additional costs incurred for travel to work or study.³

1.8 The Australian Greens are concerned that there is no clarity regarding continuity of support for those currently receiving the Mobility Allowance who will be ineligible for the NDIS. The other funding and support outlined in the Minister's Second Reading Speech and discussed at 1.7 above are not alternatives to the Mobility Allowance.

1.9 Submitters were also concerned for those recipients who are eligible for the NDIS, but face barriers to access.

1.10 Vision Australia says in its submission:

[W]e have also become aware of a number of barriers that prevent or deter some of our clients from participating, in spite of their eligibility to access the NDIS. The most significant of these barriers is the lack of information and documentation in accessible formats such as braille, large print and e-text. Some of our clients have reported that they have been unable to register for the Scheme because the NDIA has been unable or unwilling to provide them with a registration form that they can read. Other clients have noted that they cannot obtain a version of their individual NDIS plan in a format that they can read, and have expressed that the NDIA is not being proactive in providing information in a range of accessible formats.⁴

1.11 They go on to say:

[W]e are very concerned that some of our clients who currently rely on the Mobility Allowance to assist their travel to and from work, may find the barriers to participation in the NDIS insurmountable, in which case they will lose the Mobility Allowance and may not be able to remain employed or engaged in job-seeking activities. There must therefore be a recognition that not all people who are blind or have low vision are able to participate in the NDIS, even though they are eligible to do so. This non-participation is through no fault of their own, but results from barriers that could and should be removed, and which so far remain largely unaddressed. People should not be disadvantaged if they are unable to participate in the NDIS because of a systemic failure to provide necessary information and documentation in formats that people who are blind or have low vision

3 Children and Young People with Disability Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 6.

4 Vision Australia, *Submission 2*, p. 2.

require. The Mobility Allowance must continue to be available to people in this position.⁵

1.12 The Australian Greens are extremely disappointed that there are people being excluded from participating in the NDIS due to numerous barriers. The Government needs to work to address these barriers as a priority.

1.13 Vision Australia also raised concerns regarding those who choose not to participate in the NDIS, for example those receiving funding through the Job Access Scheme. Vision Australia said 'people in this position should not be disadvantaged by losing the Mobility Allowance just because the NDIS does not offer them any other significant benefits.'⁶

1.14 The Mobility Allowance should continue for those who do not transition to the NDIS, either due to ineligibility, due to barriers precluding participation or due to choice.

1.15 There is also concern for those who acquire their disability over the age of 65 and require assistance to pay for transport to their eligible activities. The Australian Blindness Forum says in its submission:

With the transfer of the Mobility Allowance into the NDIS, it is not clear what equivalent support is going to be available to someone who acquires their disability over the age of 65 and who is still in employment or wants to contribute to the volunteer community and needs a Mobility Allowance in order to continue to these activities. These people would not benefit from continuity of support because they will not have received it in the past (they will not be ongoing recipients, they will be new to the allowance).⁷

1.16 Vision Australia says in its submission:

On the one hand, the Government is encouraging people to work past 65, and raising the pension age, but on the other, it appears to be reducing the amount of support for people who acquire a disability and wish to meet these expectations of an individual's longer working life.⁸

1.17 These measures will create gaps in support. The Mobility Allowance should continue for those who acquire a disability over the age of 65.

Equity of support

1.18 A number of submitters raised concerns about the potential for those who currently receive the Mobility Allowance and are eligible for the NDIS to be worse off under the NDIS.

1.19 As People with Disabilities (WA) Inc. (PWdWA) says in its submission:

5 Vision Australia, *Submission 2*, p. 3.

6 Vision Australia, *Submission 2*, p. 3.

7 Australian Blindness Forum, *Submission 9*, p. 4.

8 Vision Australia, *Submission 2*, p. 5.

[W]e are still not actually confident that all transport costs will be covered through peoples NDIS packages. There are a small group of people who the Mobility Allowance does make a difference to in dealing with the added cost of taxis and transport. A person who is reliant on wheelchair accessible taxis may get some subsidy from the state based Taxi User Subsidy Schemes, however if they are needing to use a taxi every day to return to and from work or education they are still likely to need to pay out at least \$100 a week. Currently this cost is covered by the mobility allowance.⁹

1.20 Concerns regarding changes to the Taxi User Subsidy Schemes were also raised in the submissions to the inquiry. CYDA says in its submission:

A further concern relates to state based taxi subsidy schemes. Some state and territory taxi subsidy schemes are changing eligibility to exclude NDIS participants, with others being yet to finalise arrangements following the implementation of the NDIS. Some people have raised concerns with CYDA around losing access to a taxi subsidy as a result of accessing the NDIS.¹⁰

1.21 The Australian Greens are also concerned for those in regional areas who may be disproportionately affected. PWDWA says:

There is also the issue of transport costs in regional areas where we are hearing that only the first 15 km is able to be part of a service providers transport costs and it is unclear how the rest of the cost gets put into someone's NDIS package. Knowing your transport costs in advance is also not that easy and we have heard of people underestimating those costs for their NDIS plan.¹¹

1.22 CYDA raised similar concerns regarding transport in Individual Funding Packages (IFPs). In its submission it says:

CYDA has been informed by young people and families that at times, IFPs have been highly prescriptive and inflexible regarding the type and use of transport funded through the NDIS. It is critical to ensure that accurate identification of transport needs occurs through the NDIS planning process and that adequate resourcing is provided in IFPs.¹²

1.23 The NWRN says in its submission:

[T]here should be careful and transparent monitoring and evaluation of transport support provided through the NDIS. This is especially so because of the principle of "no disadvantage" for people transitioning to the NDIS. It is clear that there is potential for some mobility allowance participants to receive less financial support through the NDIS than they currently receive from the mobility allowance, as level 1 transport support is significantly less than the standard rate of mobility allowance. Although the "no

9 People With Disabilities (WA) Inc., *Submission 15*, p. 3.

10 Children and Young People with Disability Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 7.

11 People With Disabilities (WA) Inc., *Submission 15*, p. 3.

12 Children and Young People with Disability Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 7.

disadvantage" principle may mean that some people are able to achieve similar outcomes, despite receiving less financial support, this is a key measure of the NDIS' performance and needs careful evaluation, with results made publicly available.¹³

1.24 The Australian Greens share the concerns submitters raised regarding the potential for less financial support for transport under the NDIS.

Reduction in types of eligible activities

1.25 A number of submitters raised concerns about the reduction in eligible activities.

1.26 As NCOSS says in its submission:

We note that under the changes proposed, people with disability will no longer be eligible for the Mobility Allowance (or transport funding under their NDIS plan) because they take part in volunteering or vocational rehabilitation activities. Job search activities appear to attract transport funding under the NDIS, but they will no longer be classified as 'qualifying' activities' under the *Mobility Allowance Bill*.¹⁴

1.27 In answers to Questions on Notice taken during the inquiry hearing, the Department of Social Services said that as at September this year around 4,300 people receiving Mobility Allowance were undertaking job search activities and around 6,500 people receiving Mobility Allowance were undertaking voluntary work.¹⁵ This demonstrates that a significant number of people with disability will be affected by the changes to the eligible activities. This will be yet another barrier for people with disability to finding work when we know that they already face many barriers and are so poorly represented in the workforce.

1.28 CYDA says in its submission:

[T]hese activities play a key role in supporting social and economic participation of young people with disability. For example, volunteering can often provide young people with key skills to support future employment and can provide highly valuable opportunities for community participation. Further, job search activities frequently require travel, for example to attend interviews. It is the view of CYDA that it is important that people continue to be supported to travel to these activities.¹⁶

1.29 Queensland Advocacy Incorporated says in its submission:

The NDIS will not provide all supports to all people with disability who need assistance. Many people with disability who rely on the Disability Support Pension (particularly people with intellectual or cognitive

13 National Welfare Rights Network, *Submission 10*, pp 5-6.

14 NSW Council of Social Services, *Submission 3*, p. 1.

15 Department of Social Services, *Answer to Hearing Question on Notice No. 4*; Department of Social Services, *Answer to Hearing Question on Notice No. 6*.

16 Children and Young People with Disability Australia, *Submission 14*, pp 6-7.

impairment and or mental illness) will be not be deemed suitable for vocational education, training or employment due to a range of social and disability impacts.¹⁷

1.30 The NWRN says in its submission:

Qualification should continue to be based on the current relatively broad range of activities including voluntary work, recognising the value to both individual and community of these activities...¹⁸

1.31 The Australian Greens do not support the proposed reduction in the types of eligible activities. Job search activities, voluntary work and vocational rehabilitation program should remain eligible activities, as they play critical roles in helping people develop skills and confidence to find and maintain employment.

Reduction in the continuation period

1.32 A number of submitters raised concerns about the reduction in the continuation period from 12 weeks to 4 weeks.

1.33 People with Disability Australia says in its submission:

For those people who currently receive the Mobility Allowance, but whose circumstances change in future (such as losing their job, or discontinuation of voluntary position) will, under the proposed legislation, only retain the payment for 4 weeks, as opposed to the current 12 week period. In addition, if these individuals are not NDIS eligible, they would not be eligible in future to receive any financial support for transport.¹⁹

1.34 Vision Australia says in its submission:

It almost always takes a person who is blind or has low vision much longer to find new employment after they leave an existing job. Similarly, it usually takes much longer than four weeks for a person who is blind or has low vision to find a volunteering role if they wish to do so.

...

We believe that the proposed 66% reduction in the "continuation period" will make it even harder for people who are blind or have low vision to participate in the workforce, and we do not believe that the meagre financial savings that might result can be justified by the personal and communal hardship that will follow.²⁰

1.35 NCOSS says in its submission:

In light of difficulties people with disability face in finding work, the proposal in the *Mobility Allowance Bill* to cut the continuation period for the Mobility Allowance from 12 to 4 weeks could result in a person's ability

17 Queensland Advocacy Incorporated, *Submission 12*, p. 4.

18 National Welfare Rights Network, *Submission 10*, p. 5.

19 People with Disability Australia, *Submission 20*, p. 9.

20 Vision Australia, *Submission 2*, p. 4.

to attend job interviews being limited by transport costs. This would have adverse effects on economic and workforce participation, particularly if job search activities are not recognised as 'qualifying activities' in terms of eligibility for the Mobility Allowance.²¹

1.36 As noted in the Majority Committee Report, the Department of Social Services (the Department) in its submission says:

The existence of the 12 week continuation period has not led to any appreciable increase in the level of workforce participation of Mobility Allowance recipients.²²

1.37 However, in answer to a Question on Notice taken during the inquiry hearing, the Department conceded:

Due to the way the grace period is presented in the Department of Human Services ICT system, it is not possible to compare outcomes for different periods.²³

1.38 The Government, in fact, cannot make the claim that the 12 week period has not led to any appreciable increase in the level of workforce participation. We are concerned about the impact of the reduction on people with disability and the fact that the Government is trying to claim there will be little impact.

1.39 The Australian Greens do not support the proposed reduction in the continuation period as it will have a financial impact for people with disability. Removing job search activities, voluntary work and vocational rehabilitation program from the type of eligible activities as discussed above will only compound this.

Removal of the allowance advance

1.40 NWRN supported the retention of the allowance advance in its submission saying:

Finally, we believe that the flexibility of a 6 month mobility allowance advance is valuable for people with a disability and should be retained. In fact, we believe there is merit in exploring this as an option for the NDIS scheme, if not available. The ability to access funding in advance may help achieve the NDIS' wider goals, including individual choice and control, by giving the individual more ability to bargain with providers to meet their transport needs at the lowest cost.²⁴

1.41 The Australian Greens do not support the proposed removal of the allowance advance. Recipients of the Mobility Allowance should be able to access six months of the allowance in advance to assist with upfront transport costs related to eligible activities.

21 NSW Council of Social Services, *Submission 3*, p. 2.

22 Department of Social Services, *Submission 8*, p. 2.

23 Department of Social Services, *Answer to Hearing Question on Notice No. 8*.

24 National Welfare Rights Network, *Submission 10*, p.6.

Recommendation 1

The Australian Greens recommend that the Bill not be passed, in its current form.

Senator Rachel Siewert

APPENDIX 1

Submissions and additional information received by the Committee

Submissions

- 1** Spinal Cord Injuries Australia
- 2** Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW Inc
- 3** NSW Council of Social Service
- 4** Australian Network on Disability
- 5** National Disability Services
- 6** Vision Australia
- 7** Blind Citizens Australia
- 8** Department of Social Services
- 9** Australian Blindness Forum
- 10** National Welfare Rights Network
- 11** Royal Society for the Blind
- 12** Queensland Advdocacy Incorporated
- 13** Macular Disease Foundation Australia
- 14** Children and Young People with Disability Australia
- 15** People With Disabilities WA
- 16** Blind Citizens WA Inc
- 17** Inclusion Australia
- 18** VALID Inc

- 19** Name Withheld
- 20** People with Disability Australia
- 21** Vision 2020 Australia

Answers to Questions on Notice

- 1** Answers to Questions taken on Notice during 21 November public hearing, received from Department of Social Services, 23 November 2016
- 2** Answers to Questions taken on Notice during 21 November public hearing, received from NSW Council of Social Service, 23 November 2016

APPENDIX 2

Public hearings

Monday, 21 November 2016

Parliament House, Canberra

Witnesses

National Disability Services

BAKER, Dr Ken, Chief Executive

People with Disability Australia

FRENCH, Ms Samantha, Advocacy Manager

Children and Young People with Disability Australia

GOTLIB, Ms Stephanie, Chief Executive Officer

BRIDIE, Ms Winnie, Policy Officer

Vision Australia

MAGUIRE, Mr Bruce, Lead Policy Adviser

JACOBS, Mr Scott, Advocacy Adviser

Blind Citizens Australia

CHAPLIN, Mr Rikki, Advocacy and Policy Officer

Australian Blindness Forum

GRIMWADE, Ms Jennifer, Executive Officer

Macular Disease Foundation Australia

HERAGHTY, Ms Julie, Chief Executive Officer

CHOO, Mr Mark, Senior Policy Officer

Royal Society for the Blind of South Australia

STARKEY, Mr Tony, Government Relations and Accessibility

New South Wales Council of Social Service

HODGE, Ms Carolyn, Acting Policy Team Leader

FRISCH, Ms Ya'el, Policy and Research Officer

National Welfare Rights Network

BUTT, Mr Matthew, Executive Officer

Department of Social Services

HALBERT, Ms Cath, Group Manager, Payments Policy

McDEVITT, Ms Helen, Group Manager, NDIS Transition Oversight

McGUIRK, Ms Emma Kate, Branch Manager, Work and Study Payments