

MAY 2019

Chair Chat

with Prof. David Gilchrist



Vox Populi: The Federal Election Special

This edition of Chair Chat will focus on the recent federal and state government budgets and will provide a summary of the policy platforms of the two major contenders in the impending Federal election. This will provide voters with some clear information on each party's support for the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Federal Budget 2 April 2019

The Federal Budget has allocated \$17.5 Billion during the 2019/20 financial year. The implementation of the NDIS is now officially delayed by one year to June 2021, while the scheme will not be fully implemented in WA until June 2023. The federal budget allocation is estimated at \$22.2B recurrent in the 2020/21 financial year.

In this budget, there was \$528 Million allocated for the Royal Commission into abuse, neglect and exploitation of people living with disabilities. This funding includes the cost for the conduct of the inquiry across the nation of \$379M over five years, plus an allocation of \$149M to assist people living with disabilities and their families to engage in the process with ongoing support and counselling (Source: Federal Budget Paper, Community Services, April 2019).

The Terms of Reference and process of the Royal Commission will be described in more detail in a future article.

State Budget 9 May, 2019

The State Treasurer delivered the state budget on 9 May. This was the most disappointing budget in the disability sector in 25 years. The only highlight being \$40 million to be spent over five years to deliver support for students with disability in government schools.

This budget contained nothing else new for the disability sector and only \$8.5 million was allocated in last year's budget for transition to the national scheme, less than half of what is required. People with disabilities, their families and carers have been severely short-changed by this unresponsive state government.

Policy Platforms

The disability sector welcomes the current Federal Coalition Government's support for people with disability by:

- Promising that the NDIS will be fully funded;
- Reducing red tape through a new NDIS participant planning pathway;
- Assisting people in rural and remote communities and ageing parents of children with disability to navigate the NDIS;
- A Participation Service Guarantee to reduce the time taken for people with disability to receive plans, organise reviews, receive assistive technology and access specialist disability accommodation;
- Setting an employment target of seven percent by 2025 for the employment of people with disability in the Australian Public Service;
- Providing additional employment support for people with autism spectrum disorder;
- A similar commitment by the WA State Public Service would also be welcome.

By way of comparison and contrast the policy platform announced by the Federal Labor Opposition, include:

- Placing people living with disability first, with a focus to provide funding earlier (early intervention) and not rely on more expensive

supports later in life;

- Establish a NDIS Reserve Fund to ensure the funding is provided more consistently,
- Provide more and better trained staff, including the removal of the current inexplicable staffing cap on the national agency;
- Improve planning, identification and access to supports for people living with disability;
- Provide more equitable access to the NDIS, taking more account of local and cultural realities;
- A promise to reduce the current wide policy and implementation gaps between the NDIS and mainstream services under a new National Disability Agreement;
- A commitment to provide a skilled disability workforce, through a planned and resourced National Workforce Strategy;
- Improve research and evaluation support, underpinned by data in a format that enables service providers to make better strategic business decisions. This measure would assist to reduce the potential for market failure that is an inevitable outcome of the current implementation process.

Nulsen Group would broadly support many of the policy directions set by both major parties. We would also recommend the establishment of an

independent pricing and funding body, that would eliminate the current conflict of interest that exists in the national agency.

On Saturday 18 May, as voters we will have the opportunity to select the future federal government that will respond best to the needs of people living with disabilities, their families and carers. Let's trust that as a nation we will have the wisdom to choose wisely and clearly express the voice of the people (Vox populi...).



Professor David Gilchrist BA BBus PhD FCA FAIC is a chartered accountant and a historian. He holds a PhD in economics from the University of Notre Dame Australia and is currently a Professor at the University of Western Australia as well as the Public Sector Accounting and Disclosure Research Cluster. Over his 25-year career, David has held many senior roles in the not-for-profit, commercial and public sectors. He has taught at several universities across the globe, sits as Chairman on multiple boards and has published several key national reports. Achievements include: working as the Assistant Auditor General WA, the Associate Dean of the School of Business, University of Notre Dame Australia, Chairman to Nulsen Disability Services, and the Kimberley Individual and Family Support Association. David produced the “Australian Charities 2013” and the “Australian National Costing and Pricing Framework” issued jointly with National Disability Services. He is widely published as an academic and a journalist. [See David's full profile here.](#)