

Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Peter Foster; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Sophia Moermond; Hon Kyle McGinn

---

## STATE DISABILITY STRATEGY

### *Motion*

**HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan)** [1.12 pm]: I move —

That the Legislative Council commends the McGowan Labor government's ongoing commitment to building inclusive communities which support and empower people with disability, through the state disability strategy.

Today I would like to talk about the McGowan government's ongoing commitment to building inclusive communities that support and empower people with disabilities through *A Western Australia for Everyone: State disability strategy 2020–2030*. The strategy was announced in 2020 and is made up of four pillars: rights and equity; inclusive communities; participation and contribution; and living well. I am not going to go into the pillars at this time—I am sure some of my colleagues may do so, and they have already been spoken about in Parliament—but the government also created a two-year action plan that will be reviewed and renewed every two years so that it remains responsive to and reflective of society as we know it.

The state disability strategy plan will ensure that we have the foundation for building a more inclusive WA, which is important for us as a community as we move forward. It also acknowledges and responds to the value of diversity in our community. Luckily, all of us sitting in this house are able-bodied, but that was not always the case for me. Once upon a time, I had an operation on my foot, which required me to spend three and a half weeks in a wheelchair. Until that time, I had never realised the obstacles faced by somebody in a wheelchair. The first lesson I learned was to never let your nine-year-old hold on to the wheelchair as you go down a ramp because they think it is funny to let go of the wheelchair. The second lesson I learned was that going to a shopping centre was extremely difficult. I had the humiliating experience of getting my wheelchair wedged as I was going around a book store because the shelves were too narrow. I could not move and a man had to rescue me. I ended up not buying a book and saying quite a few words near the counter, which, by the way, I could not reach as a person in a wheelchair. As able-bodied people, we do not normally think about these things. Imagine what it would be like to be a child in a wheelchair or a child with varied abilities. What is it like for them to go to a playground and to go into schools? Luckily, as part of this planning, our councils are also looking at schools and playgrounds to determine how we can best put forward the needs of our children as they grow in the community.

One of these places—this is an unashamed plug—is Pia's Place at Whiteman Park, which is in the eastern suburbs. If members have not been to Whiteman Park—I will unashamedly plug it again—I urge them to please go. It is a beautiful place to visit and is free for residents. People can go for picnics, children can play and it has a paddling pool. It also has a railway that is accessible to all people, including those in a wheelchair and parents with prams, which is another area that people forget about. Pia's Place is a playground that was built for children of all abilities. It is extremely important that we consider children of all abilities because when we talk about children with disability, we are not just talking about children in wheelchairs. We could be talking about children who have sensory issues, who are autistic or who have an inability to hear or see. We have to create spaces that can adapt to cater for all children, which is what Pia's Place at Whiteman Park does. A few years ago, the McGowan government gave a \$1.25 million grant to help build Pia's Place, which is named after the daughter of the Rudds, whose daughter passed away a few years ago. It was built by a group that travels around Australia to help build more inclusive playgrounds for children. A similar playground is Shipwreck Park, which is a nautically themed park in, I believe, Hilbert, which is in the southern suburbs. Children with different abilities can play on not only the playground, but also the sandpits and at sand tables. They have barbecue facilities and fountains for children to access, which makes them feel as though it was made for them as well. They have quiet nooks and crannies, because at different times all children require a quiet place to gather their thoughts. Anyone who has ever had a child who is overwhelmed or overstimulated will understand that it is important to have places of quiet reflection for children. Children have highs and lows and different abilities and challenges. These are playgrounds for children of all abilities, which means that children who can run, jump, climb and cause mayhem in a playground can continue to do so alongside children who do not have those abilities. That is just one of the many strategies and things that are coming through here in WA. Another thing that has come through and has been completed as part of the two-year action plan is the establishment of the office of disability. The Koolangka Bridge at Perth Children's Hospital has been completed. People who have had the opportunity to walk across the bridge will know that it is absolutely fantastic. It allows not only children with varying abilities but also parents and families to safely access Kings Park. Kings Park is another place where there are all-access areas that people of all abilities can visit. It is another beautiful area in WA where it is free for all of us to go to enjoy and to picnic. We are very lucky here in WA because of this.

There was also the launch of the autism alert card. Children with varying degrees and levels of autism can be extremely difficult. People may have noticed when they go to their supermarket that the store has a quiet hour or two on maybe a Wednesday or Thursday morning. That is to enable parents with children who cannot deal with the extra

Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Peter Foster; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Sophia Moermond; Hon Kyle McGinn

---

noises, music and loud goings-on in a supermarket to take the children to do their shopping without overstimulating the children. It is very important and can benefit not just children with autism but also any child with sensory issues.

One in five Western Australians live with a disability. That is quite remarkable; if we look around the room, we can see that it means a lot of us here will know people who have a disability or know people who have children with a disability. I have worked with children with a disability. Their disability does not stop them from having fun, playing, forming relationships, forming friendships and basically participating in society. I have friends with disability that impedes on some aspects of their life, and I have friends who are Auslan interpreters. I have been very happy to be exposed to parts of the deaf community who think it is absolutely hysterical when they find out that I am Scottish and make the sign of bagpipes because apparently in Auslan that means I am Scottish. They point at me and laugh and think it is very funny. I do not take offence. I think it is funny when they say what Australians are in Auslan as well!

We all have a role in creating an inclusive community. Any action we take that is big or small has the power to change lives. The small changes we make today could have massive impacts in the future. All Western Australians have that responsibility and we should all be standing up and acknowledging and paying respect to people with disabilities. My colleagues will get up and talk and I am sure that they will talk about the International Day of People with Disability, which is this Friday, 3 December. Thank you for your time and I will leave it to them.

**HON PETER FOSTER (Mining and Pastoral)** [1.22 pm]: I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by Hon Lorna Harper and I thank her for moving this motion. I would like to start by acknowledging her contribution and for sharing her personal story of her broken leg. I have a similar story; I sprained my foot a couple of years ago when I put my foot on the ground incorrectly and was laid up for a few weeks due to having to keep my foot in the air, which was quite an inconvenience, because those who know me know that I am a very busy person. It was at that moment I realised just how reliant I was on my partner, my son and those around me. It reinforced to me that it is very important that our state have a strategy like this to empower people and to include them because laying up at home for a few weeks was not fun.

As Hon Lorna Harper mentioned, it is important that we move this motion this week because on 3 December it is International Day of People with Disability, a United Nations-observed day aimed at increasing public awareness about the importance of access and inclusion, understanding and acceptance of people living with a disability. International Day of People with Disability is also important to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements and contributions of people with disability.

Visibility of disability is important. It brings the community together for a better understanding of disability and also promotes inclusion. A few weeks ago, the Minister for Disability Services announced \$100 000 in grants, made available to 100 organisations across WA for inclusive events to be held to mark this day on 3 December. Recipients in my electorate include Broome Regional Aboriginal Medical Service, which will be hosting an awareness lunch; Carnarvon Tennis Club, which will be hosting an inclusive tennis fun day; Empowering People in Communities in Karratha, which will be developing inclusion cards; the Far North Community Services in Derby, which will be hosting an IDPWD art showcase; and the Shire of Exmouth, which will be hosting a morning tea to recognise local leaders who are promoting inclusion.

Unfortunately, disability is underrepresented in the media and the workforce. Many people with a disability are often highly skilled or have incredible stories to tell, but the lack of accessible career pathways, employment opportunities and a commitment to authentic representation create significant blockages for those wanting to forge ahead in their careers. That is why talking about disability today is so important, and this is why the McGowan Labor government's commitment to support and empower people with disability through the *State disability strategy* is also very important. All of us have a role to play in creating an inclusive community. All acts, either big or small, have the power to change lives.

It is important to note that more than 411 500 Western Australians live with some form of disability. The *State disability strategy* was launched by the minister, Stephen Dawson, in December 2020 and is our state's commitment to all people with disability. It aims to promote opportunities for the whole community to work together to achieve transformative change. In the recent 2021–22 state budget, we committed \$13.4 million over four years to establish the office of disability within the Department of Communities, which will lead the state's strategic policy and functions for disability services. The office will coordinate the state's response to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. It is important here to point out that the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted on people with disability, their families and carers, and has changed the ways in which we conduct business. The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability has received evidence that people with a disability have faced various barriers, including communications, and that is why the work that will be done by the office of disability will be so important. The office of disability will be used to promote the rights and interests of people with disability and the broader disability sector, and will be a vital conduit of information and knowledge on a range of services that people with disability require. It

Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Peter Foster; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Sophia Moermond; Hon Kyle McGinn

---

will sit within the Department of Communities and will support the WA government's long-term commitment to empowering people.

Members may remember that prior to my election to this place I worked with the Department of Communities in Tom Price. In my role, I worked closely with the disability services team and I saw firsthand some of the good work that was being undertaken within the department to support and empower people with disability. I would like to pause and acknowledge the good work of the local coordinators who have worked with individuals, families and carers to access information, and engage with the community to identify their strengths and needs and to support the families in gaining the skills, confidence and expertise to develop, maintain and review the plans and access to funding. In the state budget, we also committed \$2 million to expand the Changing Places network, which provides secure, clean facilities for people with a disability who need space and assistance to use the bathroom when out and about in the community. There was also a commitment of \$500 000 in seed grants to support the establishment of innovative microenterprises by people with a disability and develop and implement a business mentoring initiative to support interested businesses to overcome their uncertainty in employing someone with a disability. Finally, \$100 000 was committed for the provision of purpose-built all-terrain wheelchairs at beaches and in national parks so that people with mobility issues can explore the great outdoors. Accessible tourism is often talked about in the media. According to Tourism Research Australia, one in five people with a disability are not holidaying because it is too difficult, with the shortage of accessible accommodation and accessibility to information being key barriers to travel.

The McGowan government is listening and the \$100 000 in the state budget will help those with mobility issues wander out yonder. The Parks and Wildlife Service has made a number of tourist destinations more accessible across regional WA, including in my electorate, with Karijini National Park having wheelchair access to both the visitor centre and the Hamersley Gorge lookout; with Monkey Mia having wheelchair accessible decking to allow close-up viewing of the dolphins at feeding time; and with the Kalbarri Skywalk, which I visited recently with Hon Sandra Carr, also having wheelchair accessibility from the car park to the viewing area, with accessible toilets and cafe.

There is more to be done, and that is why the state disability strategy, and our government's commitment to it, is so important to building inclusive experiences for all. In late September, the Minister for Disability Services announced \$200 000 in funding to Nirrumbuk Environmental and Health Services to develop culturally appropriate National Disability Insurance Scheme services in the Kimberley. Nirrumbuk's aim is to build capacity and to help youth independently manage responsibilities that come with long-term unemployment. The grant funding part of the transition fund was established to help registered service providers in the disability services sector transition to the National Disability Insurance Agency. The services at Nirrumbuk will help grow its Aboriginal workforce and build upon the services that it provides to the Broome and the Kullarri region.

Before I finish my contribution, I want to acknowledge a local group in Tom Price and Paraburdoo that is empowering local families. They call themselves the Tom Price and Paraburdoo Special Families Group. It was established only last year, in 2020. The group's primary focus is to advocate for local families with a child with a disability. They also build connections with each other because, as members will appreciate, connection is very important when living in a regional town that is somewhat isolated. I acknowledge, in particular, two individuals in that group, Audra Smith and Kristiana Italiano, both of whom have children with a disability and work endlessly organising events and supporting one another. The aim of the group is to work with the community to educate, empower and promote inclusiveness, focusing on the ability, not the disability. The group currently has about 40 members and will be hosting an International Day of People with Disability and Christmas function this Saturday at the Mountain View Sporting Club in Tom Price from 11.00 am. I will be joining them for that celebration.

In conclusion, I support the motion moved by Hon Lorna Harper today and commend the McGowan Labor government's ongoing commitment to build inclusive communities that support and empower people with a disability through the state disability strategy. This is evidenced by the state budget and also through our efforts to establish the office of disability through the Department of Communities. I commend the motion to the house.

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan)** [1.32 pm]: I stand to make some comments on this motion and say at the outset that I am the B team as far as the alliance is concerned. The A team's Hon Donna Faragher had intended to speak, but is away on urgent parliamentary business today. After a full morning of committee hearings, here I am. It is an area that I feel strongly about and I am delighted to comment on it.

I thank Hon Lorna Harper for bringing the motion to the chamber. Having said that, I do not want her to get too comfortable. After my very strong support for the last motion, I will most definitely support the intent of this motion; however, in terms of strategies, it is a little early to be passing too much praise on the strategy. We will wait until we see what happens on the way out. Having said that, the strategy is a bold step forward. It is a very good step forward. It did take a while, and the minister opposite will know that I asked numerous questions on this strategy over the last four years, but it has finally got there and I am pleased about that. It is a good step forward.

As far as people with a disability are concerned, it is wonderful that we are getting to the point as a society that we are witnessing people with a disability moving from being marginalised to the mainstream. People who for generations have been marginalised in every theatre of their life are moving to empowerment and mainstream society. That transcends all areas, not least being, of course, education. I will touch on that very briefly. As education minister I was insistent that students with a disability were treated, as much as we possibly could, as mainstream students. The former Liberal–National government put an enormous amount of resources into education support centres, and an additional \$40 million in 2016. It is so good to see when we visit schools—I know Hon Sue Ellery will agree with this—and when we go to education support centres et cetera, that students with a disability are now moving into what is deemed an inclusive classroom; that is, they are in a classroom with mainstream students and a raft of other cohorts of students. That is testament to where we are moving as a society.

Way back in 1994, the Richard Court government established the Disability Services Commission. The Disability Services Commission was applauded across the nation. It was used as a beacon for how to deliver disability services. It was a very good commission. In our term of government, we created for the first time a discrete Minister for Disability Services. That was, again, an indication of the significance of that portfolio. I am pleased that the current government has shown the interest that it has in this sector. It has to be bipartisan. It also has to be not only community based but nationally and internationally based. The fact that it is nationally based goes way, way back to 2011 when the Productivity Commission identified issues with the delivery of disability services, and to 2012 when Julia Gillard was the first to propose the notion of a national disability insurance scheme. That has been rolled out in the ensuing years through what is now the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

That was the only time in Western Australia that there was a bit of a disconnect between the two parties about the delivery of the NDIS. The previous Liberal–National government wanted to be part of a scheme that would deliver locally as opposed to nationally through Geelong. I still stand by that. That probably would have been the best way. It would have avoided a lot of the difficulties that arose for people who were getting their financial plans in accessing information and funds through Geelong. I will not make a big deal of that. It is a national program. Another Productivity Commission report in 2017 identified a number of systemic issues across the nation, particularly with obtaining qualified staff for the rollout of the NDIS. I will not waste a millisecond on that for anyone; that would just be nitpicking. The NDIS is a magnificent program. It is empowering people with a disability. It is saying to people with a disability, “You can be in control of your own life.” What a wonderful vehicle. That is why I am so supportive of the NDIS.

While we are having show-and-tell, I had my own experience about 11 years ago when I had tried to play tennis like a 20-year-old, but it did not work and I snapped my Achilles. For someone who is fastidious about their physical activity, it was not pleasant. That was a poignant moment for me. It was a real eye-opener. I had been down south, playing tennis doubles with former Premier Colin Barnett, Michael Sutherland and Andrea Mitchell. I came back home to Perth that night and I had my foot in plaster. I have stairs in my home. I tried to use crutches for the first time on my way up the stairs, and I landed flat on my face. I sat on the stairs and felt completely out of control. I thought, I am not going to be able to do this. The doctor had told me that the inflammation would take three to six months to heal. I thought, rubbish; it will take only a couple of weeks. It was so disempowering. I sat there for minute and I said to myself, “You sook.” This is fact. This is true. I certainly used the word “sook”. Yes, it is true—I had to put some plastic over my leg when I had a shower, I had to get carted around everywhere, and I could not go for a run. I could not do all those things. However, some people are like this every single day of their lives. Some people are born with a disability. So, of course I picked up my chewie and realised I could not do anything about it and got on with it. Some people do not have that privilege, particularly those who are born with a disability. For those who become disabled later in life, it is a seismic shift, and that is why the National Disability Insurance Scheme is such a good scheme.

We have had a number of teething problems, and Hon Stephen Dawson them knows well. I think he handled the portfolio very well, and his office and my office, as I was the shadow minister at the time, worked very well together trying to facilitate a more seamless transition to a financial plan for dozens upon dozens of people with disability as they transitioned to the new scheme. I like to think that things have improved from the initial teething problems and that gradually more and more people do not have to worry, because they have enough issues in their lives as it is, about whether they will have the same amount of money they had previously or any money at all.

I am probably being a bit naughty here, but this is an observation. I reckon that in a lot of instances with the NDIS—this is inevitable when billions upon billions of dollars are traversing the nation—a business culture has developed in some areas instead of a care culture. Some service providers, not people with a disability, started to exploit the situation and saw it as a means to an end for financial benefit. That is a shame, because they were exploiting some of the most marginalised people in our community. Ideally, when we come out the other end—it might take a few more years before we get there—everyone with a disability who receives their package will feel more empowered, and will be more empowered, and will be more financially able. As I said, I applaud the NDIS.

Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Peter Foster; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Sophia Moermond; Hon Kyle McGinn

---

I have said this before and I am not going to be critical; again, it is a suggestion for the government. When it reviews the machinery-of-government changes, I strongly recommend that it unscramble the egg with the Disability Services Commission. I know the government has an office of disability services or something, but it is still consumed within the Department of Communities. As I say, I am not being difficult here, but one of the biggest issues I experienced with people with a disability over the four years that I was the shadow minister was that it was very difficult for them to communicate with government, and this was at a time when we were transitioning to the NDIS. Fortunately, I had a very good relationship with the then minister, so we were able to sort out these issues. But when a department such as the Department of Communities deals pretty much mostly with the most marginalised people in our community—Aboriginal people, people with a disability and those who need child protection services and housing—it is dealing with people who really need support and someone who has their back. The Disability Services Commission was renowned nationally. I really hope that when the government reviews the Department of Communities et cetera, it considers unscrambling that aspect of the egg at the very least. That would be widely applauded throughout the disability sector, unless there has been a massive shift in the last eight months. I say this hand on heart: not one person in the disability sector said to me that they supported moving the Disability Services Commission into the Department of Communities. That is just some feedback. Members opposite are the government and I respect that, and I will not do anything to undermine the disability sector, but that voice was unambiguous and unanimous. These people like to have their own standalone Disability Services Commission, and, as I said, nationally, it was widely applauded.

I apologise; I will stop there. I realise we have a few more speakers. Having said that, I thank Hon Lorna Harper. It is a good motion and I like to think that ultimately, in years ahead, people with disability will be more empowered and will feel that they are mainstream, and that this strategy is successful in achieving those ends.

**HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West)** [1.44 pm]: I thank my colleague Hon Lorna Harper for moving this motion and I thank Hon Peter Collier for his input. I, too, stand to support the motion and reflect on *A Western Australia for everyone: State disability strategy 2020–2030* and the action plan. Hon Peter Collier mentioned that it perhaps took some time to get there, which is not always a bad thing. Obviously, I thank the members of the fortieth Parliament for the time and effort they put into getting this strategy together. One thing I am particularly pleased to see in this strategy is the action plan, which Hon Lorna Harper spoke to. I think those of us who worked in or out of government over the decades have perhaps seen strategies or strategic intents that are printed and then sit on a shelf, so it is good to see this one has an action plan. I am particularly heartened to see that lead agencies have been appointed on a number of these matters. I think that really drives engagement.

It is probably worth reflecting how few of us in this place have a lived experience of disability, and perhaps we can all think about what we can do to encourage more political engagement from people with disability. Our lived experience seems somewhat limited to injuries and perhaps misadventure, dare I say. I do not have a story to tell, other than that my husband has broken his leg twice playing veterans AFL, and I have learnt that I will never be in the caring profession! That is my own reflection.

I would also like to thank Hon Peter Collier for talking about how the relationship in schools is now much more inclusive. My three daughters went through the Catholic education system in regional WA, so quite small country schools, and they have all had experience of being in school alongside kids with disabilities. I think that really helps to normalise it for our next generation. I think it is very different from back when I went to school, when we just did not have access to seeing that lived experience firsthand.

I want to acknowledge Hon Stephen Dawson who, as the Minister for Disability Services in the fortieth Parliament, launched this strategy. I have the media release here from December 2020. I remember it, because there was also the launch of the autism alert card, which was spoken about earlier. At the time the card was launched, I remember an ABC regional radio report covered it quite extensively and talked to a number of parents about the difference it would make in the lives of their young adult children. The autism awareness card alerts the emergency services and police that people may have communication difficulties or exhibit unusual behaviours. I remember that as being a big leap forward. It sounds like quite a simple thing, but that is why when we have action plans and stakeholder engagement, it is important that we actually listen to people who have these lived experiences.

One of the pillars of the state disability strategy that I am particularly pleased to see is “Participate and contribute”, which is about how we can support people to play more of a role in the workforce if that is their desire and ability. We have such a strong economy at the moment that we have skill shortages and an incredibly low unemployment rate. It really is imperative that people who want to play a bigger role in the workforce are empowered and supported to do that. If we do not take full advantage of those people in our community who can assist, our economy will be missing out, and there are many social benefits that come from working. I am particularly thrilled about the pillar “Participate and contribute”, which is about supporting people with disability to get the education and skills they need and opportunities for meaningful employment and economic independence. This is one for us all to reflect on: How can we support people with disability to hold positions of leadership and influence across the public, private

Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Peter Foster; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Sophia Moermond; Hon Kyle McGinn

---

and community sectors? How can we support people with high and complex needs to have the opportunities and networks that will help them to participate in a way that suits them?

I am really keen to see what comes out of the \$5 million innovation fund. I have a media release from our new Minister for Disability Services, Don Punch, who is from my electorate. On 1 October 2021, a \$2.5 million initial round of innovation fund grants was announced to generate new employment opportunities for people with a disability. Tenders for these grants have now closed, but it is going to be really exciting to see what projects have been put forward and who has accessed those funds. The media statement says that the grants will —

- Focus on developing projects that creatively apply new knowledge, technologies or processes to improve the inclusion and independence of Western Australians with disability

This will happen in a way that helps to grow those employment opportunities. I do not think that it is any accident that these grants were announced by the new Minister for Disability Services, Hon Don Punch, who is also the Minister for Innovation and ICT. I really look forward to what that holds for us when the successful tenderers are announced. As I said, the tenders closed in October.

I also want to briefly touch on those employers who are already working in this space. Many members would know that Good Sammy has a long history of providing employment services to people with disabilities, most commonly through its op shops. I have an ABC media report of Wednesday, 1 December—that is today! I was trying to remember what day it was because, like Hon Peter Collier said, I was in a committee meeting all morning as well. This is a story about Good Sammy and how its involvement in the container deposit scheme has helped it to provide more employment opportunities. I will read a little excerpt from this news story —

Josh Turner remembers the first time he was paid after starting work at the Good Sammy container deposit depot.

“Honestly, it was awesome. I felt like I’d earned it,” he said.

“I felt like I ... put in some effort and this is the reward that I got and I was just hyped.”

Mr Turner is neurodiverse and previously had only been able to work in volunteering roles.

He said getting his first paid job had made a great difference in his life.

This is the most important quote for me —

“I’m now actually even more social outside of work. I’ve even made a little circle of friends at work that I go out and do dinners with,” he said.

...

“I am now able to ... talk to people, getting to know how to talk to strangers.

“I’m still developing the skills to ... be confident in front of strangers, but I’m getting there.”

This is what these programs are all about. This program not only offers paid employment to people, but also empowers them to move up the next step of the ladder. The container deposit scheme has created seven new jobs across Good Sammy’s two drive-through locations in Wanneroo and Canning Vale. Workers who wish to remain in their role can, but the main goal is to provide them with the skills and opportunities that will take them into other positions well beyond that particular job at Good Sammy.

This story was released by ABC online news. I do not know if other people have noticed this, but the ABC seems to be leading the charge on positive stories about disability. I know that it has employed a number of journalists with a lived experience of disability, which goes a long way, as I said, to making sure that we do not just have a bunch of people like us reflecting on sporting injuries and not actually having that true, lived experience.

With that, I would like to again thank my colleague Hon Lorna Harper for bringing this motion to the house. I commend the motion to the house.

**HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan)** [1.53 pm]: I will take only a couple of moments. This motion deserves a lot more time but we need to get to a number of other matters. I want to pick up on the last thing that Hon Jackie Jarvis said. We can all have some empathy for people with disabilities, but it is very difficult for an able-bodied person to really understand what it is like to have a disability. I want to talk about an area that I have a particular interest in—the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. This community has a particular problem because their disability is not an obvious disability. A person walking down the street would have no idea of the hearing capacity of someone from this community. This is a little bit different from other disabilities that are more obvious to able-bodied people, who can then assist or recognise more easily when there is an opportunity to assist.

Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Peter Foster; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Sophia Moermond; Hon Kyle McGinn

---

The other thing with the deaf and hard of hearing, particularly with the profoundly deaf, is that there are a lot of different views and challenges within the community. If a person is born deaf, the situation they are in can be very different and varied. For instance, a young person born into a family who uses Auslan will very much be pushed into the culture of the deaf community, so they will often miss out on the variety that other children have. A more difficult situation is a deaf child who is born into a hearing family in which the parents do not learn Auslan. A deaf child growing up in a family in which they have no real contact with their own family let alone outside of their family are in a very difficult situation. They struggle to try to catch up, and often never catch up, with education and other things.

People may not know that Auslan is totally different from English; English has no correlation with Auslan whatsoever. If someone knows Auslan, people suspect that they might know written English, but that is not always the case either. There are a wide variety of views within the community and a wide variety of views outside the community looking in, so all these things need to be taken into account. As I said, it is very difficult, but there are some green shoots. One green shoot is the motion today with regard to *A Western Australia for everyone: State disability strategy 2020–2030*. We need to continue to revise that, and I congratulate the McGowan government for taking that step. The National Disability Insurance Scheme empowers people with disabilities, and that has been mentioned today as well. There are days when we celebrate not the disability of people, but the ability of people. In September, there was the International Day of Sign Language. There was also the National Week of Deaf People. I attended some events fairly recently. One very inspiring event was Telethon Speech and Hearing's Power of Speech Awards. Hon Kyle McGinn attended the day with me. The young children there have had cochlear implants fitted and they have grown in confidence exponentially. I thank Telethon Speech and Hearing for the invitation. Recently—again with Hon Kyle McGinn; Minister Don Punch; Hannah Beazley, MLA; and Hon James Hayward—I attended the Access Plus WA Deaf centenary ball. It was absolutely amazing to see the whole community get together and celebrate at the centenary ball and to see them dancing and really having a good time. It was incredible.

The last thing that I want to mention is—as I said, it does deserve a lot more time, but we do need to get onto other things—next year on 16 February we will have the inaugural event of the friendship group for the deaf and hard of hearing, which members will receive an invitation to. This will be an opportunity to get all the different parts of the community together to build those bridges and educate ourselves as much as we can on the challenges facing that community. Hon Kyle McGinn, as a parliamentary secretary, has taken a particular interest in this, which has made me extremely grateful.

**HON SOPHIA MOERMOND (South West)** [1.59 pm]: I will not be long. I commend Hon Lorna Harper for putting forward this excellent motion. As a person with about a 60 per cent to 70 per cent hearing loss, I rely on my hearing aids all the time. I miss stuff in this chamber, especially if everyone is talking and it all sounds quite funny and hilarious—I have no idea what is going on, which is okay. I miss cues in here as well and that causes a level of anxiety in me because I want to make sure that I am not missing things such as when I am supposed to stand up and sit down and all that. I think that aspect, the anxiety around not hearing things, is often missed by people. Even though I have hearing aids that are valued at \$11 200, which is pretty standard for a good set of hearing aids, they do not seem to work with the loop in here, so I will have to buy some new ears. Even though they are very good, they do not replace normal hearing. In a room full of people, if I cannot see someone's face, I cannot hear them, basically, so I sometimes escape to the room next door to hear members speak so that I can follow it as well. Thank you.

**HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral — Parliamentary Secretary)** [2.00 pm]: I want to thank Hon Lorna Harper for bringing such a great motion into this chamber for us to discuss. I will start by saying what a great debate it has been this morning hearing about each other's experiences and the respect everyone has for this issue. A key thing that has come out this morning is about understanding the past and trying to build an inclusive future. I also pay my respects to the previous minister, Hon Stephen Dawson, who is also in the chamber and who I know worked tirelessly in the disability space. He has a very good reputation amongst organisations for putting in some hard yards in the last term. I also want to acknowledge that I am representing the Minister for Disability Services, Hon Don Punch, who has passion in this space. I think it has been great for the industry to have these two ministers back-to-back, pushing a very strong agenda on how we can improve the lives of people with disabilities.

I want to go through a couple of things that have been said. Hon Lorna Harper touched on the four pillars, and I will go into a little more detail about the four pillars because I do not think members delved too hard into them. They have been critical to the 10-year strategy that we are only very fresh into. I acknowledge that the two-year action plans are very responsive. The way that they rotate means that we can be updated and they can be formulated in a way that if there is change—for example a pandemic—we can navigate our way through a more critical space that needs to be identified and worked on.

Pia's Place rang a bit of a bell for me, Hon Lorna Harper, because if I saw an inclusive playground when I take my nephews down to the park, it would make me feel good, knowing that a child with a disability has the ability to play just like everybody else and be in that space together. That is really good. I am looking forward to getting down

Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Peter Foster; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Sophia Moermond; Hon Kyle McGinn

---

to see it. From what the member said, it sounds pretty amazing. I do not know whether I will be able to fit down the slide, but I will give it a go!

Hon Peter Foster mentioned inclusive events grants. Yes, that has been absolutely great out of this strategy. Giving local governments and organisations the ability to get funding to create inclusive events is another step in the right direction, absolutely. I also note that Hon Peter Foster mentioned the under-representation of people with disabilities, particularly in employment and within all levels of government from federal and state to local government. I feel a bit of optimism; I think we are getting there and I think we are getting there with a lot of minority groups. It is one of those things that we have to keep getting better at, and a bit later I will go into a few of the things that we are trying to bring together to make even more representation of people with disabilities in the disability space.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a very heavy and harsh effect on people with disabilities. Hon Peter Foster identified that. I like the all-terrain wheelchairs that Hon Peter Foster mentioned. I have seen one and they look like something out of a *Starship Troopers* movie. They have massive wheels and they get onto anything. That has given an ability for someone to get onto the Exmouth foreshore and potentially go out to Oyster Stacks and Turquoise Bay, which is just a great opportunity. The more accessible tourism we have, the better it will be for our state, not just for people in Western Australia, but for people coming from around the world and across Australia when we get back to some normality.

I will touch on the office of disability. Hon Peter Collier briefly touched on the Disability Services Commission, and I will go through some things with the office of disability that may reassure members on where we are heading with that. I take on board what members have said, but I think we have put in place something that takes up that space. Hopefully, I can answer some of those questions. The member mentioned that it is a bit early to judge, and I agree with him on that. It is a 10-year strategy. As I have said previously, it is adaptable within our action plans. It will be a movable feast. I am confident that we are off to a good start, but we just need to keep tracking and make sure that we keep onto it.

I absolutely agree with the comments on the National Disability Insurance Scheme and empowerment. The feedback I get just in Kalgoorlie from the Goldfields Individual and Family Support Association and Empowering People in Communities is that people are feeling empowerment. Instead of being with an organisation, they make the decision to take someone individually because they love that person and that is the person they want to be connected with the whole time. To me, it is a huge step in the right direction. I agree that there are teething problems, and I know that the former minister would have had some pretty stressful days and nights during the rollout of the NDIS. All I can say is that I am hearing more success stories than negative ones, which is a positive turn. I look forward to seeing the communication of the NDIS improved as well, because some of the feedback I get is about the ability to connect with someone. I believe the helpline was shut down as well, which is just madness. At a national scale, we need to ensure that a little bit of change for a person with disability can have a massive change and effect on their life, particularly when they cannot get assistance in what is sometimes a very complex situation.

I will never call on Hon Jackie Jarvis to be a carer for me! I thank her for highlighting that to the house! I also thank her very much for bringing up the innovation funding. That was something that the previous and current ministers worked very, very hard on, and I think it makes a lot of sense. The pillar of “participate and contribute” will be focused on over the next four years as one of the four pillars. The member mentioned Good Sammy Enterprises, and yes it does an amazing job in its support for people with disabilities. I am attending an event this weekend with Good Sammy’s to celebrate the International Day of People with Disability.

Meaningful employment was also touched on. It goes without saying that meaningful employment creates social engagement—the feeling of being part of a team and having support, which I think is really important.

I thank Hon Martin Pritchard for raising Access Plus WA Deaf. It is an amazing organisation that I recently had the pleasure of engaging with. When I went to the gala ball, naively rocking up and not knowing what to expect and then to be in a room with everyone communicating with Auslan, it was quite an experience. I have to say that I had a very eye-opening experience that I will take with me when leaving this place. You end up feeling like you are the person with a disability, but the people there make you feel so at home and comfortable. We were lucky enough to have interpreters. I think what the Auslan interpreters do is phenomenal. Just one achievement that night was that they allowed me to engage with people who were so happy. They were telling me that they did not have a disability. They do not feel as though they do, because they can communicate and they have two legs and two arms. They made it very clear to me that maybe I was the one with a disability! It was really good and I cannot speak highly enough of the minister’s and my night. Access Plus WA Deaf was amazing.

I will touch on a couple of things in the time remaining. Importantly, the McGowan government’s innovation fund is a key feature of implementing and achieving the strategy. The \$5 million innovation fund will stimulate innovative ways to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities and enhance independence at home and in the community. That is important. The key part of the strategy is the ability to spend locally and build the local economy whilst also being inclusive. That benefits everyone within the community, not just people with disabilities. I have heard



Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Peter Foster; Hon Peter Collier; Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Sophia Moermond; Hon Kyle McGinn

---

so many stories of people who have hired somebody with a disability and have got so much more out of that employment through their own business, which is really successful. That fund commenced in 2021–22. The initial round of funding included \$2.5 million, which was a really good start. I understand that the Minister for Disability Services will announce the successful applicants for the innovation fund in January 2022. We are looking forward to some of the new adventures that will come out of that innovation space. I look forward to talking about them in the future in this place.

I said that I would touch on the office of disability. We are very proud that as part of the 2021–22 budget, we will establish the state’s office of disability to promote the rights and interests of people with disability and the broader disability sector. The establishment of an office of disability will ensure that disability issues continue to be at the forefront of the state government’s focus and that there is a strong voice advocating for people with disabilities across government, the disability sector and the broader community. The office will act as a vital conduit of information and knowledge for a range of quality services that people with disability require. We envisage a type of hub scenario, which would provide the ability to access a one-stop shop for advocacy and information. Set up under the Department of Communities, the office of disability will provide disability sector stewardship, advice on state and commonwealth systems, and drive work and innovation to advance the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in Western Australia. The office will also provide leadership through a dedicated team to implement, monitor and further develop *A Western Australia for everyone: State disability strategy 2020–2030*. That is impressive. As I said earlier, there is a bit of fluidness to it and a changing environment. We need to adapt to that. The office of disability will have the ability to do that. I hope that gives some reassurance to Hon Peter Collier that there is a space that will provide advocacy and push the agenda of disability services further.

Members touched on the grants for the International Day of People with Disability. We have been providing multiple grants since 2017 for events across Western Australia to celebrate the International Day of People with Disability that highlight the benefits of inclusive communities. We provided \$100 000 in 2021 for sponsorship of inclusive events and activities. As I said earlier, that is a huge start to getting the community to come along on this journey with us, which is absolutely critical.

I could go on and on because this strategy has so many different angles to it. The four pillars break down where the strategy is heading. I will touch on them briefly before I conclude. As Hon Jackie Jarvis mentioned, the first pillar is “Participate and contribute”. Another pillar is “Inclusive communities”, which ties in with the grants and innovation in the strategy. The other pillars are “Living well” and “Rights and equity”. These pillars define the strategy that will be rolled out over the next nine years. I am looking forward to seeing more inclusivity for people with disabilities. I say to any employer out there: take the chance and have a go, otherwise you will not understand the benefits your organisation will get by having someone passionate and driven to be a part of your business.

**HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan)** [2.15 pm] — in reply: I rise again to quickly thank my colleagues for their contributions. I love Hon Peter Foster’s idea of going down to the beach. It is great to see how inclusive it is at the beach now. I very well remember the contribution of Hon Peter Collier as a former Minister for Education about addressing the needs of children with special needs at school.

I agree with Hon Kyle McGinn that nursing may not be Hon Jackie Jarvis’s calling. Hon Martin Pritchard spoke about the deaf community. Yes, I understand a little bit about that; whether people are capital “D” Deaf or little “d” deaf depends on where they are. It is quite complex and people do not realise. I would particularly like to thank Hon Sophia Moermond for sharing her personal story about the impact of our speaking in the chamber and how sometimes it is difficult for her to hear. As a chamber, that is something we should all be conscious of. We will try. I cannot guarantee it because some people in here are a bit rowdy—not me! I thank her very much for raising that. I thank again Hon Kyle McGinn for his wrap-up of everything we spoke about.

Moving forward, it is really good to see a cross-party agreement on how important this state disability strategy is. So far, so good, but we have a long way to go. It will be good to work with everybody in the chamber to keep moving forward. I thank members very much.

Question put and passed.