

Are we kidding ourselves with NDIS?

Rights-based disability services, like rights-based medical services, requires the services be contribution funded by the general population accepting an increase in the overall Medicare levy - seen by many as a tax. A significant change to the Medicare levy to accommodate whole of life services and equipment for people with a disability would almost certainly come down to a national referendum.

Prime Minister Rudd recently threatened a national referendum if the states refused to support his health reform. The states just laughed, as no one believes such a referendum would pass. Only three states would have to vote no, to sink it.

Of the 44 referendums held in Australia, only 8 ever passed. These were:- Senate elections, Deakin, 12 December 1906, 82.65: State debts, Deakin, 13 April 1910, 54.95: State debts, Bruce, 17 November 1928, 74.30: Social services, Chifley, 28 September 1946, 54.39: Senate casual vacancies, Fraser, 21 May 1977, 73.32: Referendums-Territories, Fraser, 21 May 1977, 77.72: Retirement of Judges, Fraser, 21 May 1977, 80.10.

So rather than face losing a referendum, Kevin Rudd trucked big dollars in federal sweeteners to the states to achieve little real health reform, mainly political face saving and increased bureaucracy. The achievement is little more than extra money for the states, with Rudd no longer having to worry about going to a referendum on health, or having to worry about fighting Labor premiers at the same time as fighting Tony Abbott at an election later in the year.

With all this Federal/State dog-fighting over an area, health, which is of direct benefit to all Australians, what hope is there for that which is of little direct benefit to most Australians - Disability services and equipment.

Medicare history (<http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/SP/medicare.htm>) shows it had a very rocky start. Although its principle is of benefit to all Australians, Medicare does not include meaningful dental services. So will the general Australian population accept paying extra Medicare levy, a tax for which many will see as no immediate personal benefit? Or will they see the potential long term benefits for themselves, especially in their senior years. And, accept their moral obligation to fellow Australians less fortunate than themselves.

Healthcare spending as a percentage of GDP - Australia comes 15th in the world, after Greece, Italy and Iceland. Both Britain and New Zealand are below Australia, yet they both provide far better disability services than Australia!

LISA Comment: The NDIS principle is vital if people with a disability are to have equality of human rights with the general Australian population. We must all have good access to good entitlement based services which support our quality of life, throughout our life.

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