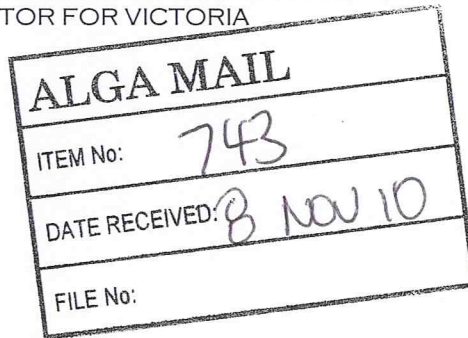




SENATOR MITCH FIFIELD

SHADOW MINISTER FOR DISABILITIES, CARERS AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR
MANAGER OF OPPOSITION BUSINESS IN THE SENATE
SENATOR FOR VICTORIA



Cr Geoff Lake
President
Australian Local Government Association
8 Geils Ct
DEAKIN ACT 2600

4 NOV 2010

Dear Cr Lake

Thank you for your letter of 1 October 2010 advising of resolutions passed at the 2010 ALGA National General Assembly of Local Government. I am pleased to be able to advise you of the Coalition's position on the issues raised in the motions you have forwarded to me.

The Coalition acknowledges that all levels of government have a role to play in delivering services to people with a disability and carers. I note that local government, through its representation on the Council of Australian Governments, does have an opportunity for input into the National Disability Strategy and its implementation. However, given the unique role of local governments in delivering services at a close community level, there is merit to the proposal to include a local government representative on the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council. Whilst the appointment of a local government representative is a matter for the Government, the Opposition would be supportive of the appointment of a suitable person.

In relation to the concept of a long term disability care and support scheme, the Coalition recognises that the level of support a person with a disability receives can depend on a number of factors. What state they live in, whether the disability is congenital or was acquired and, if acquired, whether it was in the workplace, a motor vehicle accident or some other context. The result is that many people with a disability are left without the assistance they need.

With an ageing population and a frayed patchwork of support for Australians with a disability there is a community consensus on the need to do better. There is particular concern for people with severe disabilities who need long-term care and those whose carers are no longer able to provide constant care and support.

The idea of a national scheme that moves to a support system based on need rather than rationing is worthy of examination. The Coalition supports the referral of the concept of a National Disability Insurance Scheme to the Productivity Commission for inquiry. Australians with a disability should be supported properly regardless of how they acquired their disability.

The Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, has said:

There are millions of Australians who are involved with this, not because they necessarily have a disability themselves, but because their loved ones do and they are rightly, rightly very interested in the outcome of this Productivity Commission inquiry and we won't let them down.

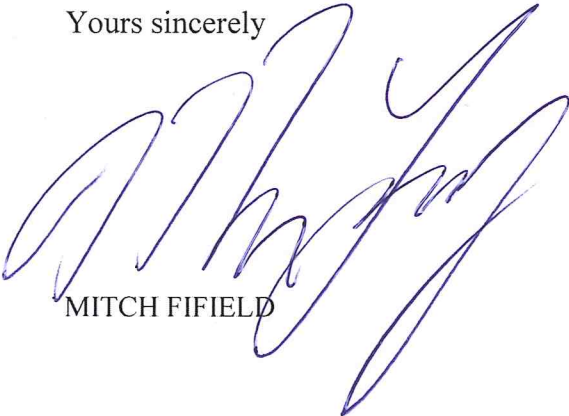
(Tony Abbott, doorstep interview, Adelaide, 7 May 2010)

The Coalition acknowledges the strong interest from the disability sector in reforming this policy area, and will continue to engage with the community as to how Government can better deliver support on the basis of individual need.

On housing design, the Coalition is committed to working with the residential building and construction industry to promote voluntary guidelines for accessible housing for older Australians and Australians with a disability. This is a bi-partisan commitment.

I trust that this advice will be of assistance to you and your members. Thank you for taking the time to write.

Yours sincerely



MITCH FIFIELD