

## **COSP 12: Australian Government's National Statement**

Statement by George Sotiropoulos, Group Manager of the Disability, Employment and Carers Group, Australian Government Department of Social Services.

Thank you Mr President.

I am very pleased to represent Australia at the twelfth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Australia welcomes the leadership taken by the UN Secretary-General in promoting disability inclusion across the UN system. Australia remains a strong advocate for disability inclusive development and disability rights globally.

Australia also welcomes the development and implementation of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, having recently contributed funding through the UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to support a more disability inclusive UN system, including initial implementation of the strategy.

Australia remains committed to supporting an active and central role for people with disability and actively supports international cooperation on disability inclusion. Last month we concluded our three-year term as co-chair of the Global Action on Disability (GLAD) network.

We remain engaged in this unique and innovative collaboration towards more disability inclusive development and humanitarian action.

In the Human Rights Council, we continue to promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

Mr President,

One in five Australians has a disability. Ten years ago the launch of the first National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 paved the way to improve the lives of Australians with disability.

The Strategy is a shared commitment by all governments to work together to improve the lives of Australians with disability, their families and carers.

The current Strategy expires in December 2020. Governments across Australia are now working together to develop a new strategy that responds to a changed disability policy landscape and includes a fully implemented National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Australia's NDIS now provides more than 275,000 people who have a permanent and significant disability with the reasonable and necessary supports they need. This includes around 85,000 who were not previously receiving disability supports.

Once fully mature, the Scheme is expected to support around 460,000 Australians who have a significant and permanent disability, enabling choice and control over the support they need to achieve their goals and aspirations.

The independent NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission has been established to regulate and improve the quality and safety of NDIS services and supports.

Australia is committed to supporting its estimated 2.7 million unpaid carers who are providing support and care for someone with disability, a medical condition, or someone who is frail due to age.

From July this year, new and improved supports and services for carers will commence through an early-intervention and preventative service model. These services are designed to support carers to remain engaged in their communities, participate in education and the workforce. This will provide carers with access to assistance proven to help improve their health and wellbeing and long-term outcomes.

Increased access to employment opportunities is key to improving economic security and personal wellbeing for people with disability.

To help achieve this, Australia has a long-standing commitment to support jobseekers with disability into long-term employment through the Disability Employment Services program.

Since its commencement in March 2010, the program has supported 834,000 individuals with disability, with 33 per cent of those achieving employment lasting at least six months.

Approximately 20,000 people with moderate to severe disability are employed by 170 Australian Disability Enterprises. The Government supports these employees to do their work via funding in their NDIS plans.

This year we are pleased to have in attendance an Australian civil society delegation of 25 representatives, providing an important leadership role for Australia's disability community and representing a mix of gender, age, geography, cultural background and disability.

We look forward to exchanging ideas, knowledge and experience over the coming days of the Conference.

Thank you.