

SPEAKER:

Good morning everyone, could I ask you to please start to take your seats? Good morning everyone, could I ask people to start making their way to a seat. Thank you.

DONNA PURCELL:

Good morning everyone and welcome. Thank you for attending today's launch of Australia's Disability Strategy and Employ My Ability. Today's event is being live streamed to people across Australia. I am Donna Purcell. I am proud to be here today and presenting on behalf of the National Disability Insurance Agency in my role as participant advocate.

And I am delighted to be your MC today. Firstly, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners on the lands on which we meet today and pay my respects to the Elders past, present, and emerging. Before we begin, I do need to cover some housekeeping matters.

Firstly, could I please ask you to turn your mobile phones to silent if you haven't done so already? And if you do need any assistance at all today, please speak to the staff who are placed around who are wearing black lanyards. And I guess for my fellow vision impaired people, perhaps pop a hand up and I'm sure someone will offer assistance.

On behalf of us all, I now offer a very warm welcome to Ngunnawal-Ngambri custodian Uncle Paul House who will perform our Welcome to Country, thank you, Paul.

UNCLE PAUL:

(Speaks Indigenous language) Thank you. (Speaks Indigenous language) Good morning everyone. (Speaks Indigenous language) It is good to be here today. (Speaks Indigenous language) My name is Paul House Girrawah. (Speaks Indigenous language).

I was born here, the centre of my ancestral country, at the old Canberra Hospital. God bless it. (Speaks Indigenous language) Ladies and gentlemen, young men, young women, distinguished guests, Minister Ruston, Doctor Ben Gauntlett. (Speaks Indigenous language) My respects to (Speaks Indigenous language) Elders past and present. (Speaks Indigenous language)

My respects to all people and all Elders from all parts of the Country. (Speaks Indigenous language) Welcome you all to Country. Welcome to countries are made in the spirit of peace and a desire for harmony for all peoples of the modern ACT and surrounds. Our main aim as local custodians is to establish an atmosphere of mutual respect through the acknowledgement of our ancestors and the recognition of our rights and declare our special place in the pre and post contact of the region.

The name Canberra is derived from the name of our ancestral group of people, the Ngambri. (Speaks Indigenous language) Looking to see and listening to hear and learning to understand. (Speaks Indigenous language)

A respectful way of life cares for Country. (Speaks Indigenous language) Respect, respecting, respected. It's a philosophy, it's an ideology on Country. It means to go slow, be patient, be polite, be gentle. Take responsibility. (Speaks Indigenous language)

Respect can be found in the journey of the bogong moths in the mountains. (Speaks Indigenous language) Respect can be found in the grinding stones and the carved trees made long ago on Country. (Speaks Indigenous language) Respect can be found in the rivers quietly moving through Country. (Speaks Indigenous language) We listen to the old people and the ancient ones and they show us the correct, the straight the right path.

(Speaks Indigenous language) They protect us, they assist us, they guide us, they take care of us. Our people, who, through law and custom hold culture knowledge and we continue to maintain deep respect for our ancestral lands and waters. We've cared for mother Earth since the dawn of time and evidence of our occupation, our state, our ownership can be seen everywhere throughout the country.

(Speaks Indigenous language) Respect is taking responsibility for the now, the past, the present, and the future. On behalf of our matriarch, my mother (speaks Indigenous name) our Elders. We like to say (speaks Indigenous language) Respect shapes us and lifts up the people and the law of the land talks about giving respect and honour to all people in all parts of the country. Being patient, being polite.

So in conclusion, I would like to say (speaks Indigenous language). Welcome. (Speaks Indigenous language) Thank you and I would like to call young Ray to come up and join me with a welcome song. (Speaks Indigenous language) Thank you.

Thank you.

(Applause)

DONNA PURCELL:

Thank you uncle Paul for that wonderful and very moving Welcome to Country. I am pleased to welcome in person with us today Senator, the honourable Anne Ruston, Minister for Families and Social Services. Senator Hollie Hughes, Senator for New South Wales and Chair Select Committee on Autism.

Emma Davidson, the ACT Minister for Disability. Doctor Ben Gauntlett, Australian Disability Discrimination Commissioner. Doctor Simon McKeon who among many important roles is the Chair of the Disability Employment Advisory Committee.

And I'd also like to thank June Riema from First Peoples Disability Network for bringing the stunning artworks that are here with us today. Thank you. The artworks have been created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and some are with us here today and they are people with disability.

They show how connecting people with disability to their culture and expressing themselves through art and storytelling plays a huge part in healing and building resilience. I now have great pleasure in introducing Senator, the Honourable Anne Ruston. Thank you.

(Applause)

ANNE RUSTON:

Thank you very much, Donna. It is an absolute pleasure to be here. Can I also acknowledge Paul, thank you so much for the warm welcome that you always give us when we're on your Country. Can I pay my respects to your Elders past and present and also pay my respects to any Indigenous people who were in the room today.

Can I also acknowledge, too, Emma Davidson, The ACT Minister. It would have been great if we could have all of our ministers from all around Australia here today, but they will be beaming in to us shortly. Because I have to say, it has been through the collective and absolute unanimous support of all of the state and territory ministers and our Local Government Association that we have all been able to come together today in such an extraordinarily positive way to launch this strategy.

To Hollie Hughes, my very dear colleague, she keeps me on the straight and narrow I can assure you. Every time I deviate from not making sure that disability is included in everything I think, Hollie is there to remind me. To my new really dear friend Ben Gauntlett, thank you very much. This has been an extraordinary journey for me over the last 2 1/2 years as the Minister with responsibility for this.

Ben has held my hand the whole way and it's in no small part due to his extraordinary passion and work ethic and support that he's given me and my team that we are able to be here today to launch this amazing strategy. So Ben, thank you.

Also to Simon McKeon. Simon, along with his other Co-Chair, Dylan Alcott, have been absolutely instrumental in driving the Disability Employment Strategy that we are also delivering today. So, thank you so much to you and everybody else in this room because without you, we wouldn't be standing here today.

Can I also acknowledge all of the state and territory ministers who aren't able to be here today. It has been an amazing journey and it has been their support that has enabled us to do this.

Today, we are here to launch Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031. It is an absolute rock solid commitment by every level of government, Commonwealth, state and territory and local government, to make sure that we embed into everything we do the rights and the inclusion of Australians who live with disability.

Significantly, we are here today on International Day of People with Disability. It is a really timely reminder for us to all think about the extraordinary contribution that people, the 4.4 million Australians who live with disability; the contribution that they make to our community.

But what this strategy seeks to do is make sure that we're not just talking about things like inclusion and accessibility. That we are doing meaningful and real things to make sure that we turn these ideas, these thoughts, these desires, into actual, practical action.

Because unless we actually can embed every single part of our society inclusion and access for people with disability, we will have failed. And we don't intend to fail. We need to break down the barriers, but those barriers are not just structural. And I think one of the strongest things that is embedded into this strategy is the fact that we need to change attitudes.

I think we often think we have an attitude that is positive towards disability inclusion, but unless we back it up with actions, we've once again failed. This strategy seeks to make sure that every Australian has the tools to be able to back their thoughts and their desires up with real action.

I think one of the very very strong components of this strategy is the first signature on the first page is that of the Prime Minister. And then followed by that is the chief ministers, the premiers' signatures of each and every state and territory of Australia and the head of the Local Government Association.

I think this kind of high level of commitment, hopefully will give you the confidence and the assuredness that we are deadly serious about making sure that this next Australian Disability Strategy is going to deliver real, tangible, and long-term outcomes for all Australians who live with disability.

Can I acknowledge the extraordinary support and input of so many people over the last two plus years as we have consulted on developing this next strategy. What we have today is a culmination of 3,000 sets of consultation. Every level of government coming together. The broader community, whether that be people with disability, their carers, their families, the people who support them, advocacy groups.

What we see today is just, I suppose, a moment in time that has been enabled by the extraordinary input by so many people. So many of you are sitting in the room today. So, I absolutely thank you and honour you for what you have done on behalf of people who live with disability so we are here today.

I am also really excited today to say that we have put a \$250 million contribution to our components and our commitment to this strategy. We know that the previous strategy, whilst it was a very positive strategy, that there were things that we needed to do better and clearly things that we needed to do bigger. So this \$250 million commitment that we make from the Federal Government today is our commitment to you that we intend to make sure that the strategy gets delivered.

But we also are going to ensure that this strategy is held to account and that we are all held to account about making sure that we deliver on the promises that we make to you in this strategy. The outcomes cover some really clear areas, but I suppose the one that I have been particularly focused on has been around making sure that people with disability have the same opportunities to employment as every other Australian. Having a job is a game changer in anybody's life, and there should be no reason why that should be any different for somebody who lives with disability. So we are very committed to make sure that employment is embedded in everything that we do, we also are making sure that we actually have targeted action plans. So we can measure against what we're saying we're going to do, so

that we can make sure that we are held to account through the process. The first five targeted action plans, which will be released today are first of all on employment, also around community attitudes, because clearly that's a very important part, early childhood. Let's make sure that we get in there early so we can make a significant difference early on, and I'm sure Hollie will be ticking my box for that one, Hollie.

Safety, because clearly it's not just about being inclusive, it's about making sure our environment is safe, and that is absolutely imperative. But also around emergency management, when you consider the last couple of years that we've had with floods and bushfires, and of course the coronavirus pandemic. Every jurisdiction is also committed to these plans, so it's not just the Commonwealth Government, the states, and territories. I'm sure when you hear from the state and territory ministers in a minute, you'll also see that they are equally committed to making sure that we deliver on these targeted areas, these first five targeted areas to make sure that we are delivering the outcomes that we have promised.

But clearly, this is about making sure that we focus on the strengths and the abilities of each and every person. That's why today, we are also launching Employ my Ability. Because it recognises that even though we know that employers when we ask them, are warm to the idea of employing somebody with disability, it is not translating into action. So what we need to do, is make sure that we are giving the tools and the confidence to employers across Australia, to actually employ somebody with disability. Because those who do find out very, very quickly that people with disability make some of the most extraordinary employees, and the value to their business is exceptional. So can I thank today, particularly to Simon McKeon who's with us but also to Dylan and the team that have worked on the development of the National Disability Employment Strategy, thank you so much for what you have done. Because this is a real, tangible commitment by the Federal Government about making sure that employment is absolutely at the forefront of that attitude change across the whole of Australia, so that people with disability have just the same amount of access to employment opportunities that every other Australian does.

Finally, can I acknowledge today the establishment of our new Advisory Council. It is comprised with people with lived experience, and I acknowledge there are a couple of them in the room today. It will be chaired by Doctor Ben Gauntlett, Australia's Disability Discrimination Commissioner, and I thank Ben. My mum always says if you want to get something done in a hurry, you give it to a busy person. I don't know anybody who's busier than Ben. So I thought 'that's a good idea, I will give it to Ben'. (Laughs) But the Council members represent an extraordinarily diverse range of skills and expertise and experiences, and they also cover a very wide range of different locations across the whole of Australia. Sadly because of that, many of them aren't able to be with us here today, but can I acknowledge Carolyn Frohmader, Seriako Stephen, Jane Spring, who I think is here today, hi Jane. Cindy Liu, who is also here today, Liz Reid who is in the Northern Territory so clearly not here today and to Natalie Wade from my home state of South Australia. And to Kathy Hough who's also going to be a special adviser.

So it is with a huge amount of pride, a huge amount of pleasure, a huge amount of enthusiasm, and a huge amount of commitment that I would like to launch Australia's

Disability Strategy and Employ My Ability today, and to say thank you, I look forward to working with you to make sure this becomes a reality. So, thank you so much.

(Applause)

DONNA PURCELL:

Thank you Senator Ruston. And congratulations to Doctor Ben Gauntlett, the Australian Disability Discrimination Commissioner on the appointment as the inaugural Chair of the ADS Council. I now invite you, Ben, to the stage to make a few remarks, thank you.

DR BEN GAUNTLETT:

The first National Disability Strategy was about the recognition of rights of people with disabilities. The new Australian Disability Strategy is about ensuring people with disability can thrive. Thank you for those kind words, Senator Ruston, in introducing me today. Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, senior members of the Department of Social Services and senior members of the National Disability Insurance Agency, Doctor Simon McKeon. It's lovely to be here and it's an honour to be appointed Disability Advisory Council.

In Australia, there was much fanfare in 2011, when following the Shut Out Report, the National Disability Strategy was created. It was the foundation stone upon which some great social policies were created, one of those was the National Disability Insurance Scheme. But as a foundation stone, unfortunately its implementation has been patchy. This does not make Australia an orphan by world standards, a lot of international countries and organisations and areas, such as the European Union have struggled to create national disability strategies that work effectively. And a reason for that, is that people with disability are diverse, but disability itself is diverse too.

When we look at the Australian Disability Strategy, and we look at what we needed to achieve, it's not just enough that a person gets a job, they need a career. It's not just enough that they get an education, it's that they get a good education that is inclusive. It's not just enough they live in a house, it's that they live in a home. And as a country, we need to have the highest of expectations for the policies that we create. For a long time, what we have looked upon as extraordinary, is individuals with disabilities succeeding in academic, cultural, occupational or sporting fields. What we instead need to look for is a policy structure itself, which is exceptional.

The Disability Advisory Council is an important aspect of ensuring that the Australian Disability Strategy is exceptional. We need to create the structures and processes that ensure that no one is left behind. We need to ensure that we learn lessons from the Disability Royal Commission so that people are included for generations. So that whilst we celebrate individuals with disability who do amazing things, we also celebrate having an amazing system that ensures that all Australians have an opportunity now and in the future.

4.4 million Australians live with disability, of which 80% of disability is invisible. And there are 2.65 million people who work in caring roles. 4.4 million Australians is more than the population of Western Australia and South Australia combined. And of the 10-15% of people who are on the National Disability Insurance Scheme, that's more than the population of the

ACT. So disability policy is in a sense, mainstream policy and we need to see it as such. We need to see this benefiting all Australians now, and in the future.

Today is International Day of Persons with Disabilities. And the theme is Leadership and participation of people with disability towards an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 world. The theme as with most things that come out of the United Nations is a bit of a mouthful, but one of the things to be assured of is that that theme and the themes that have come out of it have been developed since 1992, which was when the Disability Discrimination Act was enacted.

Australia's first Disability Discrimination Commissioner was a wonderful woman by the name of Elizabeth Hastings. She is unfortunately no longer with us after having died of breast cancer. But Miss Hastings in the finest traditions of Disability Discrimination Commissioners gave frank and fearless advice to government, and one of the things she remarked was that we cannot have policies based around trying to treat people with disabilities as superheroes. And at that time, they were looking at running a campaign based around Stephen Hawking and FDR Roosevelt being the examples of people with disability changing lives. What she said instead is what we need to see is that human rights and inclusion and diversity are everyday issues for all people in Australia now and in the future.

So I thank you very much for appointing me to this role, Minister. I very much like it that you keep me busy, I like to be a busy person. I look forward to working with all levels of government across Australia, because I firmly believe that good disability policy benefits all Australians. Thank you.

(Applause)

DONNA PURCELL:

Thank you Doctor Gauntlett. I'm now pleased to introduce the disability ministers from our states and territories, as well as the President of the Australian Local Government Association, who are giving video messages for the launch today. Thank you.

ALISTER HENSKENS, NSW (video):

Hi, Alister Henskens, the New South Wales Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, and what a great occasion today is, on the International Day for People with a Disability to be announcing the Australian National Disability Strategy.

This Strategy will build upon the important work that New South Wales has undertaken to make our community more inclusive and accessible for people with disability and we've already had a Disability Inclusion Plan, and the Strategy will work with that and be consistent with that to ensure greater economic and social participation by people with disability. Importantly, this Strategy has been formulated listening to the voices of people with disability to ensure that it is tailored to their needs.

And today, in addition, we are announcing the Disability Strategy Advisory Council members and I am really happy to say that two New South Wales-based people will be, first of all the Chair in Ben Gauntlett but also Jane Spring will be on that Board.

New South Wales has been a great supporter from the beginning of the NDIS, and we have 155,000 people in New South Wales that are receiving benefits under the NDIS, and critically, 80,000 people who have never received any support prior to the NDIS, are now receiving it. I really look forward to seeing the Disability Strategy, the National Strategy implemented to truly benefit people with disability across Australia, but particularly in New South Wales, and I wish you all the very best for success in your event today.

JAMES MERLINO, VIC (video)

I'm James Merlino, Disability Premier of Victoria and Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. It's a pleasure to mark the delivery of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 today – the International Day of People with Disability. This Strategy is our nation-wide, long-term commitment to giving people with disability equal access to opportunities and supporting them to fulfil their potential.

In Victoria, building a fairer, more accessible State for everyone is a cornerstone of our Government's agenda. We're proud to have joined the Commonwealth and State partners to bring this strategy to this point. And alongside our soon to be released Victorian State Disability Plan, we will make sure it's delivered in full. The Australian Disability Strategy affirms that we take our obligations under the UN Convention of the Rights of People with a Disability seriously. It shows what we can achieve together, through collaboration and a national approach.

So congratulations and thank you to all involved in bringing us to this point. Your input, ideas and expertise and your willingness to share your stories, has been incredibly valuable. Today is certainly a milestone worth celebrating – but it really is just the beginning. Now that we're here, I look forward to working together to bring Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 to life and create a safer, fairer and more inclusive Australia for people with a disability.

CRAIG CRAWFORD, QLD (video)

Good morning. It's a pleasure to join you all this morning to officially launch Australia's Disability Strategy 2021 to 2031. Firstly, I'd like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land and pay my respects to Elders past and present.

I'm delighted to participate in today's Strategy launch. As today also marks International Day of People with Disability and comes just days before Queensland's Disability Action Week, which begins this Sunday, December 5. This Strategy is particularly significant for the one in every five Queenslanders living with disability. About 950,000 people and their families and carers, representatives, and advocates across our state, who help to support them.

Whether a disability has been present from birth or acquired through illness, injury, accident, or the ageing process, we welcome a National Strategy that allows all people with disability to fulfil their potential and contribute to society on equal basis with others. What is important is that this Strategy embraces the ideals of respect, inclusivity, and equality. And equally important is that it draws on the voices and experience of people living with disability, and their support network. They've made it clear that if we work to improve access to paid employment, appropriate housing, education, and a society without stigma or barrier, we're on the right path to a bright future.

That is why Queensland will fund specialist advocacy services to ensure First Nations and Culturally And Linguistically Diverse people with disability and children with young people with disability have help when needed, and are supported to build their capacity for self-advocacy. This is just one example of Queensland putting plans into action.

The launch of this Strategy marks a transformative next step towards an overarching framework for all disability policy in Australia. As Queensland's Minister for Disability Services, I'm proud to reinforce our commitment to this joint effort by Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments, to improve the lives of Australians with disability. I look forward to working together on the next steps and to create positive change in our communities. Thank you.

DON PUNCH, WA (video)

Australia's Disability Strategy is a really important statement, guiding inclusion and equity for people with disability, right across Australia. It will help business, it will help community, but importantly, it will be an action document for government in how it can promote inclusion and equity for people everywhere.

Equity and inclusion in a state like Western Australia is such a challenge, given our vast geographic area, and the remoteness of our communities. And equity and inclusion can mean very many different things for many different people. So we have to recognise a diversity that exists within disability. And this Strategy goes a long way towards that.

Within Western Australia, we have around 411,000 people who identify as having some form of disability. And our mission is to make issues of inclusion and equity the norm, rather than something we have to continually promote. And we can do this by building it into the consciousness of our state government agencies, our business community, and our local communities. And this Strategy has got a very important role in driving that agenda. We will work with the Commonwealth and with our other colleagues throughout Australia to promote the Strategy and to help make sure that it is a living document for the future.

MICHELLE LENSINK, SA (video)

Hi, my name is Michelle Lensink, and I'm the South Australian minister for Human Services, which gives me responsibility for disability in South Australia. For me, the Australian Disability Strategy is a hugely exciting time for people across Australia who have disabilities, such a diverse group of people.

Here in South Australia we've launched our inclusion plan, in fact, the South Australian Disability Inclusion Act was the first piece of legislation to pass the new parliament in 2018 under the new Marshall Liberal government. We are enormously excited about opening up opportunities where we're making sure that all the barriers for people with disability that they've experienced over so many years are coming down.

And so, what that Act has meant [is] that every state government agency, all local government agencies across South Australia now have to produce [an] access and inclusion plan and they report against that, they update them and they have input from people with

lived experience, to make sure that all of the ways in which people living with disability are often denied inclusion are being removed.

We know, for instance, that people with disability are really underrepresented in employment, and that's obviously a key area for every level of government. It's all the things from built form to websites and attitudes as well, which is one of the reasons why we've published 'Report it right', so that we have a guideline for people in the public domain who are reporting on people with disabilities in an appropriate and respectful manner.

There's other things that we've done in addition to the action and inclusion plans, which include inclusive playgrounds for those people who are subject to them, we now have a restrictive practices legislation so that we can minimise the use of restrictive practices. And we look forward to implementing Australia's Disability Strategy and ensuring that we're providing full citizenship for all of our citizens, including people with disabilities, and making sure that all the things that people who don't have disabilities take for granted are available to people with disabilities.

So, we look forward to this journey of opening up and bringing down the barriers. And I congratulate everybody who's been involved in developing this strategy.

SARAH COURTNEY, TAS (video)

The Tasmanian Government welcomes the launch of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021 to 2031. Today, being International Day of People with Disability provides us with an important opportunity to reflect on the work that we still need to do as a community. I therefore welcome this crucial strategy that will support our community to continue to drive change over the next decade. It will help guide our policies and provide the framework to ensure that as governments, we're upholding the rights, supporting inclusion and improving the participation of people with disability.

Importantly, this strategy has been developed with the input of people with disability, as well as their families, carers and representatives. For this reason, it is strongly supported by all levels of government. As a community, we are stronger when more people have the opportunity to participate as fully as possible and we are moving closer and closer every day to achieving this goal.

For Tasmania, I know that Australia's Disability Strategy 2021 to 2031 will play a vital role in the next stage of our own disability inclusion plan, Accessible Island. I'm looking forward to working collaboratively with our Premier's Disability Advisory Council and the Ministerial Disability Consultative Group, as well as the broader community on this important work, and I congratulate everybody who has had input into this strategy.

Thank you for providing me with your expertise and your guidance, and I also wish our community the very best for International Day of People with Disability.

EMMA DAVIDSON, ACT (video)

Hi, I'm Emma Davidson, I'm your ACT Minister for Disability. I'd like to start by acknowledging that I am talking to you today from the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal

people and their Ngambri and Ngarigo neighbours. This always was and always will be Aboriginal land and sovereignty was never ceded and so I pay my respects to First Nations Elders past and present and acknowledge their nurturing of future leaders.

I'm really excited today to be part of the launch of Australia's Disability Strategy. The vision and goals in this Strategy will really help us to build the inclusive and accessible community that we all want. We are going to take this to the next level with our ACT Disability Strategy, bringing the voices of people with disability to the decision-making table, working together to co-design an ACT Disability Strategy that will really help us to take pride in the diversity of different ways that our human bodies and minds work. And so I am very, very happy to be part of all of this.

I also want to take a moment to reflect on the amount of change that has happened for our disability community over the last five years. The implementation of the NDIS, as well as everything that we've gone through together with COVID and with the 2019-20 bushfires, really highlighting to us that our climate is changing and people with disability have so much to be able to bring to the table about adaptability and flexibility and to be part of those big conversations that we need to have, about what kind of inclusive and accessible community we're going to have in future.

Here in the ACT, we've done a lot of great work on things like our Disability Justice Strategy and on our COVID Public Health Strategy to include the voices of people with disability and to make sure that what we're doing is inclusive and accessible for everyone. We'd like to continue that work. And so, again, I'm really happy to be launching Australia's Disability Strategy and to then be building on it, working with people with disability on the ACT Disability Strategy for what's going to be a very, very different next ten years, but one in which people with disability are part of the decision-making process. Thank you.

KATE WORDEN, NT (video)

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I'm joining you today from Larrakia Land here in the top end of the Northern Territory. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. What a fantastic way to kick off this year's International Day of People with Disability. Australia's Disability Strategy is a shared commitment and provides a national approach to improving outcomes for people with disability, to ensure that they can participate as equal members in all our communities.

The Northern Territory Government is delighted to be part of the transformative new Strategy to drive positive change for people with disability right over the next decade. People with disability and their representatives have been central to the development of the Strategy, which has captured their voices. It's so important. Here in the Territory, we have started consultation on our very first Northern Territory Disability Strategy, which we will launch next year. Our Strategy really importantly aligns with the objectives of Australia's Disability Strategy. It will detail our priorities and actions to ensure the development and delivery of services and programs, particularly for people with disability, living in regional and remote locations across the Northern Territory.

Joining me this morning at Parliament House in Darwin to watch this launch are some key stakeholders, including members of our very own Disability Advisory Committee. I have to take a moment and acknowledge Ms Liz Reid AM, who has been appointed to Australia's Disability Strategy Advisory Council. It is so good to see a fantastic Territorian with lived experience on that council. We all have the same goal - to improve the lives of all Australians with disability. And I'm excited by the changes. And we will see over the next decade to uphold the rights, inclusion and participation of people with disability in all areas of Australian life.

LINDA SCOTT, ALGA (video)

Thank you to Minister Ruston for the opportunity to be part of today's very important national launch of Australia's Disability Strategy. I'd like to begin by acknowledging the many First Nations lands that people are from. I'm here today on Gadigal Land of the Eora Nation. And I pay my respects to Elders past and present.

I'm very proud to be here as the National President of the Australian Local Government Association, representing Australia's 537 councils. I'm also proud to be here as the sister of a person with an intellectual disability, and have a really strong personal interest in this Strategy. ALGA is extremely proud to be a signatory to Australia's Disability Strategy 2021 to 2031, as we were to the inaugural National Disability Strategy in 2010. Council facilities and services touch the lives of every Australian.

We are in a unique position to be able to listen directly to the voices of people with a disability to identify barriers and obstacles to inclusion, and, of course, to respond with local solutions. This enables us to drive change and create inclusive environments for everyone. During the first National Disability Strategy, ALGA produced a disability planning guide for local government to help councils address the barriers, in partnership with our communities.

Over the last 18 months, with natural hazards and of course, a pandemic, we've seen local governments across Australia really step into and support those most vulnerable members of our communities. Local governments across Australia are doing extraordinary work to make Australia a more inclusive and accepting society for the future. Thank you so much.

DONNA PURCELL:

Thank you, disability ministers and Councillor Scott for those messages. And I must say, it's heart warming to hear all of the commitments that have been made this morning. I would now like to play you the official video for the Strategy.

This video features some impressive people and several have joined us in person here today. I am sure you will be impressed. You will see this video over the coming months on the Disability Gateway website and on social media.

It's important to raise awareness of this important milestone for our nation. So let's watch the video.

CAPTIONED VIDEO

Female VO:

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021 to 2031 has just been finalised.

- And that's something to be excited about.

Male VO:

This Strategy will drive changes over the next 10 years, so people with disability can participate in all areas of Australian life.

- Created with the involvement of people with disability and their representatives.
- This Strategy has seven outcome areas addressing what we have said is important to us.
- We want...
- Good job opportunities and a good income.
- To live in accessible and well-designed homes and communities.
- For our rights to be promoted, upheld, and protected, so we are safe and equal.
- Access to support so we can live independently and do things in the communities.
- Access to inclusive education and learning that helps us reach our full potential.
- Good health And wellbeing for our quality of life.
- The last outcome area is about improving community attitudes...
- towards people's disability.
- So everyone understands the positive contributions we make.
- The Strategy's about improving all areas of life.
- To make sure I'm included...
- Respected...
- Equal.

Female VO:

To find out more about the Strategy, go to disabilitygateway.gov.au/ads. Australia's Disability Strategy. Creating an inclusive community, together.

(Applause)

DONNA PURCELL:

I hope you enjoyed the video, it certainly sounds like you have. It is now available, along with the Strategy on the Disability Gateway's website, as we have just heard. And I am thrilled to

say, that it includes a version that is audio described and also a transcript. And I do encourage everyone to visit that page, and visit the strategy.

Today we've also launched another important milestone, and that is Employ my Ability - the Disability Employment Strategy. Please welcome to the stage, joint Chair of the Disability Employment Advisory Committee, Simon McKeon AO, who will be followed by a short video message from joint Chair, Dylan Alcott. Thank you.

(Applause)

SIMON MCKEON:

Thanks very much Donna, this is a really historic day, it's not just another day for me to come to Canberra. This is very very significant, and I do pay tribute to the Minister and the large army of people that have invested so much work in the last couple of years to get to where we are today. One of the reasons that I know Dylan and I did find this, you know, quite an honour to head this committee was that it was an opportunity to work with, actually a large group, it was a large committee of incredibly passionate people from one side of the continent to the other. We had everybody.

People with disability, their carers, employers, employer group representatives, representation from the Indigenous community, government people, also that important group that connects employers and employees, the matchmakers. And I acknowledge today that three or four of us have come here, or who have been able to come here, Danny and Sally, Suzanne, and of course Doctor Ben, and a fantastic team from the department, often not acknowledged, but wow! We were well served this time.

It was a committee without ego, or self-importance. A challenge, because we never met once physically. But it was great, because whilst the egos were left out of the room, there was plenty of disagreement, plenty of honest conversations. Indeed, the very three words 'Employ my Ability, we spent a bit of time talking about that, because isn't it interesting, it doesn't contain the word disability. It was a great group to work with and a real honour to be a part of, the focus was always on how do we make work places open up, be inclusive, and not miss out on all that is offered by employing people with disability.

Over the many months, we seized on four key priority areas. The first one was an obvious one. Namely, I just mentioned it, opening up the eyes of employers to the really arresting data, the research that is there today, it says it works. This is not just doing the right thing. It actually works. It's in the interest, plainly, of people with disability. It's also in the interest of the workforces around them, it's in the interest of the employer itself, it's in the interest of the whole nation, the evidence is there. But the mythology that it doesn't work is still around, and the most important objective is to get rid of that mythology and to prize the nation and employers in particular of what is real.

Secondly, training, education, everyone, every young person in this country, obviously has an expectation of getting educated and trained. As indeed, people with disability do, but we haven't done as good a job as we may have. Too many people we came across over the last

year or two, young people in their mid-20s had only just got their first opportunity to commence a career. As Ben emphasised earlier, we've missed a few years there, it's been a bit slow. And there are a number other issues as to why training, education can be better in this area.

Thirdly, that important component of the matchmaking community, if I can put it that way, that connect employers with employees. It's a very complex mosaic, there's no doubt about that. It requires high capability to do it well, but we need to do it well. And then this wonderful committee, at the end of it said, "well they're the three obvious to dos", but there's this really big aspiration that we're not going to turn away from, and which we confront in Employ my Ability. And that is to turn the nation around, to open the eyes of 25 million people up, and say, "just as I have seen my own lifetime, we don't tolerate certain things that when I was little kid, perhaps the nation did."

Well no longer should this nation tolerate workplaces that just fold their arms and say we're not interested in people with disability. So it's a big aspiration, but unless there's national cultural change, we know that the first three things would only go part way. So it's been a fantastic experience, and I pay tribute to all the committee members again. Unfortunately Dylan can't be here today, I'm about to welcome him, but I have to say something about Dylan. I had the privilege of knowing a little bit about him before the committee got together, some people on the committee probably knew him quite well, many didn't. But wow! What a star. He is so much more than the world's greatest male tennis player, he is, he is the only male that's ever won the perfect slam, four grand slams and an Olympic gold medal in the one year. Steffi Graf's the only other human being that's ever done that.

But in that one year that he did that, somehow he found the time and commitment to, meeting after meeting, inspire us. He wasn't just the sporting champion that came in to, you know, lift the profile of our committee. He is an extraordinary individual, we were really privileged to have him and I'm grateful that I can introduce his pre-record now, thank you.

DYLAN ALCOTT (video)

G'day everyone. It is Dylan Alcott here. First and foremost, I wish I was there with you today. I apologise that I'm not there. Here at Melbourne Park, getting ready for my last Australian Open, which is coming up in a few weeks. It's International Day of People with Disability today, which is a day which is obviously very close to my heart. I wanna say what a huge honour it was to be the co-chair of this awesome committee. Special thanks to Simon, my co-chair, but also everybody that was on the committee that really gave some incredible insights as to how they view and where they wanna see people with disability in terms of their employment within this country over the next ten years. Shout out to the Federal Government and Minister Ruston for choosing us to be involved in this program.

I'm really excited. You know, for too long, people with disability have not had the employment opportunities that they deserve. Participation rate has not changed in over 20 years. Unemployment rate of people with disabilities is double that of able-bodied people, and all this needs to change. Our vision is to create workplace cultures where people with disability can thrive in their careers, and to be honest, the time to do that is right now. The time for words and plans and all that is finished.

We've created this plan, but we need to execute it. We need to make sure that it is funded and that is actually completed so people with disability get the opportunities they deserve. We're really excited about the work that we're gonna do within this. Thanks so much again for the opportunity to be involved.

I'm sorry that I'm not there today. But we look forward to working with all of you over the next ten years, but hopefully a lot sooner to make sure that we nail this together. So thanks so much.

(Applause)

DONNA PURCELL:

Thank you Simon, and Dylan. And I must say after that video, I feel excited.

(Laughter)

DONNA PURCELL:

Well, we're at the end of the formalities for today, and thank you all for participating in today's launch of Australia's disability strategy and Employ my Ability. And thank you to all who have joined us by livestream across Australia today, we will say farewell to you now.

For those here today, there will be light refreshments available in the next room, and thank you.

(Applause)

(Captioned video plays)