

SENATOR JORDON STEELE-JOHN



MEDIA RELEASE

Labor's NDIS Bill: Robodebt 2.0 in the making

25/7/2024

Labor's proposed NDIS Bill would expand the Government's ability to pursue debts against disabled people, their families or guardians, without fundamental debt protections in place.

Yesterday, Wednesday 24th July 2024, the Senate commenced [round two of public hearings](#) for an extended inquiry into the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment Bill 2024.

The Committee heard concerning evidence from legal representatives, most alarmingly that debts raised under the NDIS Act will not be subject to review, meaning there is no opportunity to dispute an incorrect decision or explain the situation that led to the debt.

Even in cases where disabled people or their families make a mistake, receive bad advice, or are coerced into spending funding incorrectly, the Government will be able to pursue a debt against them. This applies to cases where the NDIS pays money directly to a third party.

Victoria Legal Aid's Managing Lawyer of Economic and Social Rights Programs, Mr Miles Browne, raised particular concern with the lack of protections in place for participants, given his successful representation of the first test cases against the Robodebt system in the Federal Court.

In his words "At least [in Robodebt] people could seek a review of their debt".

Lines attributable to Senator Jordon Steele-John, Australian Greens spokesperson on Disability Rights:

"Yesterday's evidence showed clearly that Labor's NDIS Bill legislation would cause disabled people harm and make our families lives more difficult.

“There is no justifiable reason for this Government to recreate a Robodebt scenario, where disabled and vulnerable people are burdened with debt without the respect to explain, clarify or appeal this.

“It is unacceptable that this Government is failing to utilise the learnings of Robodebt, and instead are providing fewer protections and more confusion for participants.

“My office regularly hears from participants who have urgently needed to change supports to address risks to their health and safety, and are then penalised for this. The system needs to support participants in these circumstances, not disadvantage them.

“For months we’ve known Labor’s Bill puts disabled people at risk. We now know that it puts disabled people at risk of Robodebt 2.0. No wonder Labor opposed this inquiry”.

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