
School Can't Australia Press Release

Monday 25th August 2025

Minister Butler's National Press Club address on 20/8/2025 announcing changes to the NDIS, and a new Thriving Kids program has elicited much distress within the School Can't Australia parent/carer community.

Minister Butler's claims that autism and development delay are not lifelong disabilities, along with his suggestion that parents would be pleased that their children were not on a scheme for permanent disability are false.

Minister Butler's use of functioning labels (mild and moderate) to describe autism severity, demonstrates a lack of understanding of the nature of autistic experience. Use of functioning labels are widely criticised by the autism community, as they mischaracterise functioning as static thing laying on a linear scale, when in reality it varies within the contextual experience of each person. Many School Can't Australia families support children and young people with disabilities including autism and developmental delay. Many of our parents have disabilities themselves. As a community we advocate for disability supports that affirm and validate lived experience, and disability identity. We value supports that facilitate self-direction, agency and authenticity. We value collaboration, transparency and co-design as these things have demonstrated better outcomes for our community.

The proposed changes, made without consultation with the disability community leave us with many unanswered questions, such as:

- Will the new program be co-designed with people with lived experience of autism and developmental delay?
- Will the new program be neuroaffirming? Will it be seeking to make children seem "less autistic" or will it support them to be their authentic selves?
- How will the new program provide individualised supports, agency and choice?
- Will the new program be evaluated for negative effects?
- Will the new program trauma informed?
- Will the new program promote inclusion or segregation?
- What are the financial costs to families for this new program?
- If the new program is embedded in schools and early learning centres how will those educated at home or who struggle to attend, or who are excluded from schools and early childhood settings be able to access these supports?

We lookforward to a response to our concerns and are ready to engage in dialogue about how best to support young people with disability to thrive and be able to access education.

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