Australia: Albanese government prepares to ram through brutal attack on the disabled

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12 August 2026

The Socialist Equality Party will hold an online public meeting on August 16 at 2 p.m. (AEST) to discuss a socialist perspective to fight the Albanese Labor government's sweeping attack on the NDIS. Click here to register.

The federal Labor government and the Liberal-National opposition have struck a deal to rush the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Amendment Bill through parliament next week. Health Minister Mark Butler told the media on Tuesday that the cost-cutting attack will be largely unchanged.

The bill will slash $38 billion from the scheme over the next four years, resulting in the removal of more than 300,000 disabled people from the scheme, most of them children.

The NDIS cuts—the largest to any social program in Australian history—are a central pillar of the Albanese government's broader assault on health, education and other vital social spending. At the same time, billions of dollars have been allocated to finance military expansion, including lifting annual defence spending to around $60 billion and continuing to fund the $368 billion AUKUS nuclear submarine program.

The bipartisan assault rides roughshod over deep-seated opposition from NDIS participants and their families, disability experts, health and welfare workers and even recent warnings from the government-funded Human Rights Commission (HRC).

Last Thursday, the HRC issued a statement calling on Labor to "pause" its NDIS cuts. HRC President Hugh de Krester warned that the changes "constitute a significant interference with the rights of persons with disability, the rights of the child and the rights to an adequate standard of living, equality and non-discrimination, health, privacy and social security."

The backroom deal between Labor and the Coalition to ram through the cuts exposes as a sham the Senate inquiry and other parliamentary manoeuvres including the Greens' deal in June with Labor for an eight-week extension of the inquiry.

The inquiry was designed from the outset to provide a democratic veneer to a predetermined legislative result. Despite its purpose, the inquiry, which received more than 4,500 submissions, provides a glimpse of the devastating social consequences of the cuts.

At hearings on July 30 and 31 in Canberra and August 6 in Perth, people with disabilities and their families testified to the consequences of the new measures, as well as the existing problems with the NDIS.

On July 30, **Kylie**, the primary carer for her 12-year-old daughter, Grace, told the Senate hearing that her daughter lives with a profound intellectual disability, autism, drug-resistant epilepsy, daily life-threatening seizures and multiple complex medical conditions. She requires constant supervision to eat, dress, shower, toilet or communicate pain, Kylie explained. She said Grace has already undergone 43 operations in her lifetime and that she and her husband have had to administer CPR to their daughter 29 times.

She directly challenged the government's vague promises of future "foundational supports," declaring: "For families like us, those supports simply do not exist. It's impossible to replace essential supports with services that are not yet available. Hope is not a support system."

Shannon, a mother caring for two children with profound and permanent disabilities, detailed the constant fear of having to deal with the NDIS bureaucracy. She said that her 15-year-old daughter has the functional understanding of a one-year-old, yet NDIS planners continuously force specialists to re-prove the same permanent facts.

Necessary home modifications for the disabled child had been approved in 2020 but not implemented and her daughter's current plan did not provide enough funding to safely leave her home with a support worker for four hours a week across an entire year. Shannon concluded with the fear that haunts many parents of profoundly disabled children: "What keeps me awake at night is dying. Who will protect my children when I'm gone?"

Mia, who lives alone in inaccessible community disability housing with a step at the front door and no ramp, told the

committee she requires assistance with almost every aspect of daily life, including feeding herself, showering and accessing food. Despite her occupational therapist recommending 41 hours of support work per week, an NDIS planner slashed her allocation to just seven hours because she can take a few small steps.

Mia said letters from her GP and occupational therapist to the National Disability Insurance Authority (NDIA), which governs the NDIS, explicitly state that she will die without adequate support work funding. Mia is currently suffering from malnutrition because she cannot safely cook or access food consistently, yet her funding has not been increased. She rejected the bureaucratic demand that she "build capacity," stating that cuts to her physiotherapy treatments have already caused permanent physical deterioration.

Mia also recounted how a major health episode in 2025 saw the NDIS dump all care responsibilities onto her partner, causing her partner to lose her job and leading to the breakdown of their relationship. "Taking support funding from NDIS participants puts the load on family and friends and puts more strain on our already struggling health and mental health systems," she said.

Mia warned the Senate committee: "The proposed changes and cuts to the NDIS will lead to more people in my position. When we say NDIS cuts will kill us, this is what we mean. These changes will cause more people to die in pain due to preventable deaths."

Kirstie, a mother of two autistic boys, explained that families navigating the scheme are forced into a state of continuous psychological trauma, constantly re-proving permanent, lifelong disabilities to non-expert bureaucratic planners.

Kirstie said the proposed legislation would strip away the final remnants of choice and control from parents who are already stretched to their physical and emotional limits. The NDIS "reforms" were a continuation and intensification of the message families have already been hearing from the NDIA: Specialised supports are their own responsibility and if they cannot provide them, they should give up their children.

Clare told the hearing that her funding was suddenly cut in half by the agency without clinical justification or warning. When she attempted to initiate an internal review of the destructive decision, she was met with deliberate bureaucratic obstruction.

Clare said the proposed laws, which limit appeal paths for needs assessments, would institutionalise this form of structural abuse, locking participants into starvation funding levels with no meaningful legal recourse.

Caitlin, a Curtin University student who relies completely on the NDIS to attend university, explained how compounding cuts were undermining her fundamental right to education. She said funding for her essential social and community supports had been repeatedly reduced over several years, presenting her with impossible choices between grocery shopping, attending appointments and going to university. Caitlin said further cuts would force her to abandon her studies entirely.

Labor's determination to slash NDIS funding and eviscerate the rights of the disabled make clear that the task facing those who want to defeat this historic assault is to fight to mobilise all those in struggle against the Labor government's class-war agenda. NDIS participants and carers are not alone; their fight is inseparable from the escalating austerity assault on all vital social programs and the entire working class.

Across Australia, key sections of the working class—in health and education in particular—are in conflict with state Labor governments over wages and working conditions.

In Victoria, tens of thousands of teachers have held historic state-wide strikes and twice voted down sellout agreements pushed by the state Labor government and the education union. Allied Health professionals in Victoria have walked out and protested over wages and conditions, while doctors in the state have voted overwhelmingly for strike action over low pay, staffing and dangerous conditions. South Australian nurses recently rejected a union-Labor agreement that would have significantly reduced their real pay.

These expanding workers' struggles must be consciously developed and unified into a political and industrial counter-offensive against the Albanese government's cost-cutting agenda.

As the past months have made crystal clear, Labor's evisceration of NDIS cannot be stopped through appeals to parliament, as is claimed by the Greens. Disabled people, carers, and healthcare workers must unite with the working class in a political struggle against the profit system, which treats human life and dignity as financial burdens.

This is the perspective that will be discussed at the Committee for Public Education/ Health Workers Rank-and-File Committee and Socialist Equality Party online public meeting at 2pm, Sunday August 16. We urge NDIS participants, family members, health workers and educators and other sections of the working class and youth to register and attend this vital meeting.