The Boldness

**Phineas**

Hi, everyone, welcome to another edition of The Boldness. My name's Phineas. Joining me as he usually does is Raphael. Hello, Raphael.

**Raphael**

Good afternoon, Phin, the virologist is in the studio. How are you doing?

**Phineas**

I'm very well. Well now before we should continue, we should say of course, The Boldness is all about grabbing your human rights. Not just waiting for someone, one person to give them to you. Now joining us, we have a guest Raphael.

**Raphael**

Yes, we have got Kirsten Dane, the campaign manager of Every Australian Counts. Welcome to The Boldness Kirsten!

**Kirsten**

Thank you very much, Finn and Raphael. Thank you for having me.

**Phineas**

Thanks. Thanks for being here now. Um, what does Every Australian Counts do? What sort of advocacy do they provide?

**Kirsten**

Great question, Finn. So, Every Australian Counts basically started back in 2011. And basically, it was started around that time, people started talking about the idea of a National Disability Insurance Scheme. And everybody agreed that the idea for the NDIS sounded like a fantastic one. They all agreed that it sounded like it would really changed things for people with disability in this country.

**Kirsten**

But they also knew that such a big complex thing would never get up without a fight. So basically, everybody came together, and Every Australian Counts was born. So it's not an advocacy organization, like some people might know, advocacy organizations. It was actually a campaign. So it started in 2011. And just in a couple of really short years, amassed hundreds of thousands of supporters from all around the country, people with disability, family members, people who worked at the disability sector, who all came together and said, "Yes, it's time for a fair go for people with disability in this country".

**Kirsten**

And then, were so successful in what they did, built so much political and public support for the NDIS, that the NDIS was introduced a couple of years later, in 2013. And Every Australian Counts is a little bit unusual, in that usually when people campaign for something and they win, everybody just usually goes "yay", and packs up and goes home.

**Kirsten**

But because the NDIS was such a big, complex reform, and because it was rolling out over such a long period of time, everybody stayed really engaged with how the scheme was rolling out and how it was operating, which proved to be a really important thing. Because particularly in the last couple of years, we've really ramped up our activities. And our campaigning to really say, hey, the NDIS is not working as well as we all want it to. There are lots of people out there who are getting support. And that's great, but it's not working really well for everyone. So we want that to change. So that's basically what we do through Every Australian Counts. We let people know what's happening with the NDIS, and then we basically provide a platform for people to talk about their experiences with the scheme. What's working, what's not, and what they want to see change. What

**Phineas**

What do people want to see changed?

**Kirsten**

Oh, how long have you got Phinn?

**Kirsten**

And that's awesome, because that's why we all fought for it in the first place. And it's also worth remembering, there's about 400,000 people in the NDIS now. And just over a third of those people who never got support before. So under State and Territories schemes, they never got any support before. So it is worth remembering the good things about the NDIS.

**Kirsten**

So I have to say, though, that this isn't everybody's experience. We do hear from lots of people with disability and their families who are getting great support from the NDIS. And I don't ever want to lose sight of that. It's why we fought for the scheme in the first place. We hear from lots of people that the support that they get from the NDIS really has changed their life.

**Phineas**

[chuckling]

**Kirsten**

But there's a but and the but is, it really isn't working well for everyone. And even people who are getting good outcomes from the scheme still talk to us about the kinds of problems that they're having. And I would say the main issues that we hear about at Every Australian Counts are, how complicated the scheme is, and how complex it is, and how hard it is, to navigate through. How bureaucratic it is, how much time everything takes.

**Kirsten**

And then we hear a lot of about, given all of those things, there isn't a lot of support to help people navigate their way through. So they really feel like they're on their own trying to navigate this incredibly complicated, complex bureaucratic scheme. And then I think we also hear from people with disability and their families, but they'd not only like the scheme to be simpler and easier to navigate. But they want to have a better relationship with the NDIA. Which the NDIA is the National Disability Insurance Agency, and that's the agency that runs the scheme.

**Kirsten**

Pretty much people tell us that they feel like they're in quite an adversarial relationship with the NDIA. But what they actually are much more like, to have a much more positive relationship, they'd like the NDIA to listen to them about what their problems are, and then start fixing those things up. So I would say that they're most of the kind of issues that people have. How complex everything is, how much time it takes, how hard it is to work your way through, and how adversarial and how combative, the scheme has got. People really feel like they have to fight really hard to get the support they really need. And that's exactly the opposite of why we fought for the scheme in the first place. So people are pretty frustrated by that.

**Phineas**

Do you think there is a willingness on behalf of the government and the NDA to listen to people?

**Kirsten**

I think that's a hard question, Phin. And the reason that I think it's hard is that I do talk to people at the NDIA and there are some great people in there. And they do want to, they do want to listen. But I think sometimes they're hamstrung by a couple of things. First of all, I think they're hamstrung by the systems that they've already set up. And then I think that also they're, I don't think there's enough people in there who have enough lived experience of disability.

**Kirsten**

Um, and given that there's not enough people in there who I think, have enough lived experience of disability, I think it's even more important that they listen to people with disability and their families on the ground, because what I see happening is that they identify a problem, and then they come up with what they think is a solution to the problem.

**Kirsten**

And then when it hits us, people with disability in their families, we all look at it and go, but that's never gonna work. Like that's never gonna work on the ground. And I look at it and I go, and if you'd asked people with disability and their families first, before you came up with your whiz bang solution, we all would have told you that. So we could have saved a whole lot of time, and a whole lot of grief if we'd road tested things with people with disability and their families first.

**Kirsten**

So I see some good things, some good seeds of that starting to happen that, for example, the agency has just started a new project at the moment called participant first, where they're going out to people with disability and their families and asking and road testing some of their things before they introduce them. And that's still reasonably small at the moment. But I see that as a really good sign that the agency is trying to listen to people with disability and their families more.

**Phineas**

So is that type of scheme is it going to be? Is it going to be rolled out? Do you think or?

**Kirsten**

Look, I think it is, it's getting rolled out at the moment, and it's small at the moment, but I hope that it will get bigger. But I would say Finn, there's a but, you know, there's a but at the end of my sentence, and I would say that in the last month, I see some good signs there. But I also see some things that really are, not only trouble me, but really trouble people with disability and their families.

**Kirsten**

And, and I would... the example that I would point to, is that in the last month, the NDIA and the Minister for the NDIS, Stuart Robert, have made an announcement about a change to the NDIS, that is going to be the biggest change that's going to, has been made to the scheme since it started all the way back in 2013. And that change is the introduction of compulsory assessments for new and existing and NDIS participants. And that change is being introduced without talking to people with disability and their families first.

**Kirsten**

And so I would say that I see some good signs about some things in the agency. But the big issue at the moment with the introduction of assessments, that hasn't been done with people with disability and their families. We talk to lots of people and lots of people are pretty angry and frustrated about that.

**Phineas**

So what are these new independent functional assessments?

**Kirsten**

So what they, what the Minister for the NDIS and the agency have announced is, from February next year, everybody who wants to apply for the support from the NDIS, so what the agency called "accessing the NDIS" will have to go through one of these independent assessments.

**Kirsten**

And basically what they will be, is that the NDIA are going to pay a whole bunch of basically allied health professionals. People like psychologists, or speech therapists, or OT's, and those allied health professionals are going to be paid to do assessments using a number of standardised tools that have been used to do assessments for a long period of time. That will be the evidence that is given to the NDIA to determine whether you can get access to the scheme and get support from the scheme. So that's going to be introduced from February next year.

**Kirsten**

And then from July, all existing NDIS participants are going to have to go through one of these functional assessments, when they have a review of their plan. So it's gonna take a while, obviously, to get through all 400,000 existing participants. So the NDIA have said, they're going to start with people who are having plan reviews, like big life changes. You know, things like moving at home or leaving school. But gradually, every single existing NDIS participant will have to have one of these assessments done by an allied health professional using one of these tools, that is in the toolkit.

**Phineas**

These proposed assessments are only supposed to, these assessments are only supposed to last between one to four hours, and they're with, they're also with people who are unfamiliar with a person with a disability and their circumstances.

**Kirsten**

That's right, Finn. So what the NDIA are going to do, is that they are going to pay a panel of these allied health professionals. And you will be able to choose from this panel who you want to do your assessment, but it won't be able to be anybody who's known to you. So it won't be able to be you know, someone that you already work with. You know, for example, if you already see a speech therapist, it won't be able to be somebody that you already work with. The average time that these assessments will take will be somewhere between one and four hours.

**Kirsten**

But that will also include writing up the reports that the Allied professionals have to do so it's not very long. And the reason we know a bit more about this is that the government have already gone out to tender asking for allied health professionals to do these assessments. And we know from the information that was in the tender document about how long these assessments are likely to take. So, and in some cases, they might spend as little as 20 minutes with the person with disability.

**Kirsten**

Um, and so the questions that people have been asking us at Every Australian Counts is, how's that all going to work? You know, how could you possibly get a really good idea of what my life and the kind of supports I need in such a short period of time. And people are also obviously really concerned about having to do it with a complete stranger. Somebody who doesn't know much.

**Raphael**

Well thanks very much Kirsten, we'll take some community announcements and we're going to play, introducing a new segment called "Loz the stars". And we'll be back talk with Kirsten Deane, campaign manager for Every Australian Counts after the community announcements and Loz's Stars.

**Announcement**

Common Social Change Library is an online collection of educational resources for those campaigning for social change. It collects, curates and distributes the key lessons and resources in progressive movements around Australia and across the globe. The library includes over 500 resources covering campaign strategy, community organising, activist history, digital campaigning, diversity, inclusion, and much much more. During October, the commons library is running a crowdfunder to help keep its collection updated and free to the public. To make a tax deductible donation, visit www.commonslibrary.org. Common Social Change Library is a 3CR supporter.

**Announcement 2**

You're listening to 3CR 855 AM, on digital and on the internet. www.3cr.org.au.

**Speaker 1**

Hi, this is Loz's Stars, where Loz will give reviews of movies or tv shows that are on at the cinemas or streaming on your digital device. Hi Loz, what movie are you going to review today?

**Loz**

Today's movie is about Ted Bundy, America's worst serial killer, called "Extremely wicked shockingly evil and vile" [spooky noises].

**Speaker 1**

Wow gee that's a long title. Well, whose the cast in that movie Loz?

**Loz**

Zac Efron as Ted Bundy and Lily Collins as Liz Kendall. It co-stars Haley Joel Osment from The Sixth Sense. Jim Parsons from the Big Bang Theory. And John Malkovich.

**Speaker 1**

Who directed and produced this film Loz?

**Loz**

Directed by Joe Berlinger and also produced by Zac Efron. Ted Bundy was probably America's worst serial killer. He confessed to over 30 rapes and murders. But the police think it's more than 100.

**Speaker 1**

Okay Loz, tell us a little about the story of the film.

**Speaker 1**

The movie tells Bundy story from his girlfriend's point of view. It takes us through his many trials and his two escapes from custody, and up to his execution by electric chair in Florida in 1989.

**Speaker 1**

What are you most like about the movie Loz?

**Loz**

He's such a good liar and con man. You are in doubt if he's innocent or guilty until he eventually confesses just before his death. Also all the acting was excellent. Especially Zac Efron as Ted Bundy.

**Phineas**

Was there anything he disliked about the movie, Lauren?

**Speaker 1**

Nothing. I thought it was a really great movie.

**Speaker 1**

So what do you rate it Lauren?

**Speaker 1**

A solid eight out of ten stars.

**Speaker 1**

Thanks for tuning into larger stars. And next review will be "Ford versus Ferrari".

**Phineas**

Welcome back. Our guest tonight is Kirsten Deane, campaign director at Every Australian Counts. So we're talking about the NDIS and functional assessment, independent functional assessments and what things people suggesting that they would like to see change with this announcement.

**Kirsten**

I think it's pretty simple Phin, is that people are, I guess they're worried about two things. I think the first is; they're worried that the introduction of this is really just a pretty sneaky kind of way to try and limit access to the scheme. And then once people are in this game, trying to limit the amount of support that people can get.

**Kirsten**

I guess the second issue is related to our kind of earlier discussion is that this is the biggest change to the NDIS. That's being made since the scheme was started. And it's being done without talking to people with disability and their families first. So I think people have both issues with what's being introduced, but also how it is being introduced. This is going to start in next year. It's being done without it being tested with people with disability in their families.

**Kirsten**

So there was a very small pilot of this, that was run back at the end of 2018, and into 2019. There was going to be a much bigger pilot, a much bigger trial of this, starting at the end of last year, but it got called off because of COVID. Then all of a sudden, in September, the Minister announced that this was going to be introduced next year. So it's going to be introduced really fast.

**Kirsten**

And like I said, I think people's biggest problems with it are, they don't know how it will work for them. In fact, there's a bunch of people who said, it won't work for them at all. They don't think that it will accurately capture what their support needs are. And then I think there's a bunch of people who are also really angry about how it is being introduced.

**Kirsten**

You know, people with disability and their families really fought hard for the introduction of the NDIS, and they really have a really strong sense of ownership of this scheme. And that is a really good thing. It is a really good thing. So people want it to succeed. But when things like this happen, and they're introduced without talking to people with disability and their families first, it really undermines confidence in the scheme, and it makes frankly, people really angry. They feel the scheme really does belong to them. And they want a say in how it is being run. With this announcement, that's not what's happened.

**Phineas**

So is there any way that people with disabilities and their families can make their voices heard against this? I know that there was a social media campaign earlier in, in fact, last month, the NDIS crawl. Which I guess was one way people could voice their dissatisfaction with their independent functional assessments. Is there any other ways people can can voice their dissent?

**Kirsten**

Yeah, well, what we've been encouraging to do is let the minister know how you feel. So we've been encouraging people to contact to the minister, particularly email the minister and let him know what their concerns are, and what they think, should be done. So well I would really encourage people to do that. To really let the minister know, if you don't think this will work for you, and this is not the way you think the NDIS should run.

**Kirsten**

Then the minister is really the person who needs to hear that. I also think that we also need to send a message to the minister about how this happened, there's the you know, people are really worried that this is just going to add an extra hoop, an extra level of complexity, an extra level of kind of, you know, something they have to jump over before they get the support that they really need.

**Kirsten**

And one of the reasons we all fought so hard for the NDIS is to reduce the fact that you had to keep proving that you needed support and telling your story over and over and over again. People are really worried that all these independent assessments are going to do is introduce another hoop and another barrier to people getting what they need. There is a problem thing, I have to say with, there's an equity problem in people trying to access the NDIS. What people tell us is they don't think that this is the way to fix it.

**Raphael**

Now Kirsten, who is the minister?

**Kirsten**

The minister for the NDIS is Stuart Robert. And so you can either google him and you can find his contact details, or we've got everything you need on the Every Australian Counts website. We've got his email address, and we've actually even got an email that you can send to him or you can add your own details and send it as well. But yes, Stuart Robert, is the member for the NDIS.

**Phineas**

Is it similar, because I guess if people get rejected or they do the assessment and get rejected for the NDIS or they are participants and then they also get off the scheme because they're not deemed as eligible. They go back on the Disability Support Pension. And the eligibility for that is very difficult also, so people are kind of stuck in limbo, aren't they?

**Kirsten**

Yeah. So, I would say two things. The first is, we want to make sure that people who need support get it. And so we want to make sure that there's a fair process for people to get access to the NDIS and we want to make sure who people with disability who really need support, actually get it. Then once you're in thie scheme, we want to make sure that people get the support that they need, and don't have to jump through to, you know, silly hoops to get it.

**Kirsten**

And so they're the fundamental principles of kind of how the NDIS should work. We need, people with disability, need to get the support they need to get out and do the stuff that they want to do. And the connection with the disability support pension, Phinn is that you also have to go through assessments to get that and that's got a long history of people getting kicked off that through these independent assessments. And that's why the idea of assessment makes people with disability and their family so worried because successive governments not just this one, but there's a long history of governments using assessments like this to try and limit the amount of support that people get.

**Raphael**

Okay, well, thanks very much, Kirsten Deane for joining us on The Boldness. Kirsten, what's the best way to get in contact with Every Australian Counts?

**Kirsten**

You can find us on the on the website. So everyaustralian.counts.com.au

**Raphael**

Well, thanks very much, The Boldness has been talking with Kirsten Deane campaign manager, Every Australian Counts. Thank you very much. Finn, keep listening to 3CR [inaudible]. The Boldness will back on the 18th of November 2020. Analyzing the federal budget from a disability perspective, we're going out with a song. "It's complicated" by the Hackett's Thank you very much. And keep listening because the revolution has started. Goodbye.

**The Hacketts**

You can say what you want to say. It always has to be your way. Don't make a difference to me. Telling me to go away. Don't let me hear you [inaudible] me. Don't call me on the phone. Just stop wasting my time. I need space, leave me alone. What's up with that. I refuse to be a doormat. What goes around does come around. Comes around to bite you. Don't make me [inaudible]. Don't call me on the phone. Just stop wasting my time. I need space, leave me alone.