



SENATOR MITCH FIFIELD

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MEDIA RELEASE

29 September 2010

GOVERNMENT DISREGARD FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Gillard Government today demonstrated disrespect for people with a disability and their carers.

Today in Senate Question Time the Minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Evans, was asked by Senator Fifield why the Government failed to appoint a member of the executive with specific portfolio responsibility for disabilities and carers.

Senator Evans' response was one of contempt, saying:

"I'm a bit surprised the Opposition has run out of questions..."
(Senator Chris Evans, Senate Question Time, 29/9/2010)

"The Government showed a disregard for people with disabilities and their carers when the Prime Minister initially forgot to appoint a member of her frontbench with specific portfolio responsibility for disabilities and carers," Senator Fifield said.

"This took several days to patch up when finally Senator McLucas was given portfolio responsibility.

"Today Senator Evans, representing the Prime Minister, continued this pattern of neglect when he implied that questions on disabilities and carers were not important and must only be asked when 'important' questions have been exhausted.

"I truly hope that this attitude is not indicative of the approach the Government will take towards these important issues during this term."

Furthermore, Senator Evans was not even aware which of his own Cabinet colleagues had responsibility for disabilities and carers, initially claiming that it was the Minister for Health & Ageing, Ms Roxon.

In fact, disabilities and carers fall within the portfolio of the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Ms Macklin.

"Hopefully Minister Macklin will be an advocate for Australians with a disability and carers in Cabinet.

"The fact that her Cabinet colleague Senator Evans had no idea who had senior portfolio responsibility for disabilities and carers is an indication of how loudly Ms Macklin has been advocating for these issues."

Senator Evans also failed to answer why people with a disability and their carers don't deserve their own dedicated minister at least as much as, for example, the Arts and Sport.

In contrast, the Opposition has elevated this portfolio to ministerial level.

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