



SENATOR MITCH FIFIELD

SHADOW MINISTER FOR DISABILITIES, CARERS AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR
MANAGER OF OPPOSITION BUSINESS IN THE SENATE
SENATOR FOR VICTORIA

MEDIA RELEASE

18 November 2010

LABOR TO DEFY SENATE DISABILITY MOTION

The Senate today passed a motion calling on the Government to provide funding to establish a school for blind and vision impaired students in Melbourne and to establish a Disability and Carer Ombudsman.

The motion passed despite opposition from the Government which indicated it will defy the Senate order.

Senator Mitch Fifield, Shadow Minister for Disabilities, Carers and the Voluntary Sector introduced a motion in the Senate calling on the Government to provide \$2.2 million in capital funding to the Insight Education Centre for the Blind and Vision Impaired in Melbourne.

Senator Fifield's motion also called on the Government to establish a Commonwealth Disability and Carer Ombudsman to undertake a nationwide audit of special schools in order to establish the needs of students with a disability that exist across Australia.

"While mainstream schooling is appropriate for many children with disabilities, some students require more intensive support for a period of time in specialist environments," Senator Fifield said.

"Insight Education Centre is a parent led initiative that needs the support of the Government to extend opportunities for blind and vision impaired students."

Senator Fifield said it was disappointing that the Government refused to support the motion and had rejected the Senate's call for the establishment of a Commonwealth Disability and Carer Ombudsman.

"A Disability and Carer Ombudsman would give Australians with a disability and carers a real and independent voice within government, and would serve as an activist on their behalf," Senator Fifield said.

Senator Fifield called on the Government to take the needs of students with disability and their families seriously and to comply with the Senate order.

ATTACHED: Notice of motion as passed by Senate.

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Notice given 17 November 2010

*106 **Senator Fifield:** To move—That the Senate—

(a) notes that there are six schools for deaf and hearing impaired students in Melbourne but no dedicated school for blind and vision impaired students;

(b) acknowledges that whilst mainstream schooling is appropriate for many children with disabilities, some children require more intensive support in specialist environments for a period of time;

(c) supports the right of parents to choose the educational setting that best meets the needs of their child;

(d) commends the parents involved in the Insight Education Centre for the Blind and Vision Impaired for their tireless advocacy and hard work on behalf of blind and vision impaired children; and

(e) calls on the Government to:

(i) establish a Commonwealth Disability and Carer Ombudsman to undertake a nationwide audit of special schools that cater for particular disabilities to establish the needs that exist across Australia, and

(ii) provide \$2.2 million in capital funding to the Insight Education Centre for the Blind and Vision Impaired.