

Dear Friends,

Today I am privileged and honoured to be appointed by the Prime Minister as Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation.

My appointment brings great challenges and great responsibility. These portfolios impact on the lives of million of Australians and present a great opportunity to deliver a better quality of life for all Australians.

While I am thrilled to serve at the Prime Minister's discretion in this role, it is with some regret that I relinquish my former role as Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities. However, let me assure you that the Gillard Government remains committed to ensuring that people with disability have the opportunity to lead the rich and fulfilling lives they deserve.

Although this Government has made many advances in the area and put disability on the political map, there is still much to be done before people with disability are treated as equal citizens in this country.

I knew little about disability when I was elected as a Member of Parliament, but my eyes have since been opened to the suffering and need that still exists in Australia. They have also been opened to the needless barriers and attitudes that prevent people with disability from reaching their potential.

I have been inspired by the courage and passion of the many people with disability who refuse to accept the arbitrary limits that society puts on them, and who fight to change things for the better. I have also been inspired by the commitment of disability workers and organisations to giving people with disability lives of dignity and opportunity. If we are to be a truly fair and equal society, we need to do more to ensure that the most vulnerable in our community are not shut out or neglected.

The Productivity Commission's study into a long-term care and support scheme will report by July 2011. This study represents a unique opportunity to make real change to the way disability is funded in this country. I know this Government will treat the report with the seriousness it deserves.

You should be assured that my new responsibilities will not dampen my passion for disability and I will continue to argue the case for better treatment of people with disabilities as well as I can, both inside and outside of Government. I look forward to keeping in touch with you as the disability fight continues.

Yours sincerely,  
Bill



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Federal Member for Maribyrnong*

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