
EVENT: NDSCC 2011
SPEAKER: SIMON MCKEON
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SIMON MCKEON:

Thanks very much, Bruce. Now that I am up here, seeing this sea of faces is absolutely extraordinary. For someone who needs to talk now, I don't need anything other than your beaming faces!

I'd like to commend the organisers for this extraordinary conference. I've seen the agenda, starting yesterday, proceeding on, and there is a huge amount of work that has gone into this, the logistics, the organisation, and I commend Bruce and everyone who has been involved.

I have the most enormous delight in kicking off today's session, and as Bruce has so eloquently put it, the theme is all about the campaign. Interestingly, I have just come straight down from one end of the city to hear, from Parliament House, where I addressed a large group of parliamentarians and guest that quite an important day for the State Parliament here, because it is budget day. Budget speech will be given later today are the new treasurer. What I was trying to say to that group of busy people was how nevertheless important it is that they somehow carve some time out of their busy schedules to be involved in the not-for-profit sector, the community sector

[Tom.Captioner is Live]

It is now my great pleasure to introduce Simon McKeon who is a business man and philanthropist. Earlier this year on Australia Day he was appointed the 2011 Australian of the Year. His main occupation is as executive chairman of the Macquarie Group, based here in Melbourne, which is more than a full-time job, but somehow he manages to fit in an array of important government appointments and roles in the non-profit sector, as chairman of the CSIRI director. Is also a founding chairman of the MS research foundation. When he is not at work he is a keen sailor. He has set the world record for a solo sailboat in early 2009, which means that the yacht that he meant went at great speed. Please welcome our speedster and Australian of the Year, Simon McKeon.

(Applause)

SIMON MCKEON:

Thanks very much, Bruce. Now that I am up here, seeing this sea of faces is absolutely extraordinary. For someone who needs to talk now, I don't need anything other than your beaming faces!

I'd like to comIt is important for us to use every wit in our brain to work out what motivates them and what doesn't work. This morning as I was developing a message to encourage them to go to the coalface, I told them to do it for the right reasons not to do it out of any noble pursuit or sense of guilt. Do it because the cause is right for us. The disability sector has been right for me for my entire life having an older sister who has an intellectual disability. It is a labour of any great difficulty. It is something I want to do.

I also said to the politicians, "Have a bit of fun." This morning will have fun in kicking off this campaign. Most of you are sitting on this sign here. I count, count me in. I want to work out where you all come from. I am going to start with the most populous state. It may not be the most well attended here because it is in Victoria. If you are from New South Wales, can you hold them up? This is your opportunity. You have got to get one of these. We are all going to hold it together. Great to see you. Now I'm going to the West. Do we have anyone from Western Australia? They are all spread out! What about South Australia? I love my football team beat South Australian football teams. Who is from Queensland? Tasmania is very important. We have some territories as well. What about the ACT? They have got a voice! Is anyone from the Northern Territory? Yes! Wonderful! Who have I left out? Victoria! Is anyone else feels left out? No one from Norfolk Island? Torres Straight Island! Wonderful!

In a few moments I am going to ask us all in unison putting our state prejudices aside to put them all up

collectively and there will be all sorts of photos and television cameras taking some images of that. That is in a few minutes.

I am so glad I have been hearing the strong presence of the productivity commission yesterday. How do I say this? I am not sure if anyone from the productivity commission is here today. I apologise in advance because I will say things are somewhat suspect will. The productivity commission has been an organisation that has been around for a long time. It has a relatively low profile except when it is doing some work in the sector that is close to us. That has been the case for the last year or so. Everyone in this room would be aware of what the productivity commission yesterday.

It performs a very valuable work for the nation. It is given tasks to do. Typically by the Federal government. To investigate what is in the nation's interest in relation to reforming a particular sector. As a sector we have been very well served by the productivity commission's report. I have got half of it here. Also because the productivity commission has done a huge amount of work. We have also been well served by the likes of Bruce and many others who have been so actively engaging with them and giving them the information and the data that is so important. It would have been easy and indeed possible for the productivity commission to have said that they were too busy and it is just not the right time to think of a whole saw revolution of our disability sector. I salute them because they have had the courage by saying that is in the national interest to reform the sector. Many of you know what the principles are.

We are talking about a scheme that no longer is overly concerned how one is the disability arose in the first place. It is targeting more than 360,000 Australians who would receive funding. The needs of those people would be assessed fairly obvious rigorously. If there is a great focus on ensuring that is neither too tough all too lenient. It will be overseen by a federal agency. As we have come to expect in Victoria, there will be a huge emphasis on choice. People can choose their own disability service providers. After disability support organisation to organise a package. It will be a completely different system in many respects.

Ultimately there is a cost. The cost is coming at a time where there has been extraordinary pressure. On the federal budget at this point in time. There is nothing we can do about that. All we can do is argue our case strongly as we possibly can armed with a document that we have never had before. Armed with a document that is prepared by a body that is part of the Federal government. It strongly that is the case that we can do better in the area of disability.

State and federal job must inject around 6.3 billion into the disability sector. The commission is saying that we need to double that to do the right thing for people with a disability. Most importantly it is saying that this is not just because that is what it is going to cost, the productivity commission is saying that extra investment in today's dollars or 6.3 billion is actually money well spent. It is a good investment for this nation. That is where we start a campaign. It is a good investment for the nation.

One thing I think we need to emphasise strongly in arguing why it is a good investment for the nation is that it is not just a matter of giving people a hand out. Giving them something more than they have today. It is actually just being equitable and providing an appropriate opportunity for them to lead their lives just like I have had opportunities government funded to lead my life. Every now and then I have to go to a hospital. I had primary, secondary and territory education largely funded by the government sector. I don't have another disability but for goodness sake I have needed government support so that I could live out my potential. It is precisely the same argument. There is a group of wonderful Australians and all we are asking is that for them to live out their potential, there needs to be a new regime and some funding.

What does the community actually get in return? One of the important part of this campaign is that we need to articulate the more we spend money in this particular area, surprise surprise, the less the demand in other areas provided by government. Less than providing housing. The more that our people are

independent and can look after their own lives, the less they need to go to the Department of Housing to look for accommodation. The less they need to draw upon the health Department and the general health budget. Centre link is another classic example. The more we can provide opportunities for people to live out their full potential, the less they need pensions.

I think there is a more hard work to be done in that area. It is not necessarily explicitly spelled-out as much as it may be. The more that we argue that this is a good investment, the more it will be accepted. Let me tell you something about the Productivity Commission. Its brief essentially is just to produce times like this. It is not implement. It is not a body that implements plan. It does create roadmaps for politicians. It doesn't have a scheme up and running. That is not what the productivity commission does. I think our sector has been extraordinarily well served because as you saw yesterday we have people on a commission who clearly are very passionate about what they are talking about. This is not just another job for them.

The productivity commission's role is not to take this further. That is our job.eas provided by government. Less than providing housing. The more that our people are independent and can look after their own lives, the less they need to go to the Department of Housing to look for accommodation. The less they need to draw upon the health Department and the general health budget. Centre link is another classic example. The more we can provide opportunities for people to live out their full potential, the less they need pensions.

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[Bettina.Captioner is Live]

I strolled in this morning with a friend of mine, Phil Hayes Brown. I know you all come from a place of extraordinary service day in and day out, but a few weekends ago I was part of the opening of an extraordinary facility in Dandenong. This extranet facility was a wonderful elaboration between different not-for-profit groups each with a different focus, providing housing for the elderly and focusing on people with disabilities. This collaboration meant that it was able to offer a contemporary facility where elderly people who were having housing difficulties were able to live on the same large facility as a place providing services to their child or children with a disability. Quite remarkable and groundbreaking. We had a lot of fun and it was an extraordinary afternoon of loud music and hilariously funny people entertaining us.

One of the highlights for me was at the end, as I was strolling to my car. A group of young ladies in their 20s came up and wanted a photograph with me - good for my ego! I started asking them why they were there and they said that they worked in a facility a few metres away and they each talked with such pride about the fact that their job is to assemble headphones for Qantas.

The next day I had to take a long flight to Perth, to give an important speech to a bunch of CEOs. I knew I had to encourage people with influence like that group to not only focus on their bottomline and maximise profits which they have to do in a competitive world, but to also do their bit through their corporations, for the community. On that long flight over, most of the people went to sleep, but I was pondering about how I could make that point. One of the flight attendants came up to me and asked me,

"What's bothering you?" And I said that I wanted to inspire a bunch of CEOs from a different world to what I see every now and then. We got talking and I spoke to her about my extraordinary experience the previous day with this facility opening and seeing wonderful people with disabilities having a great time and talking to a group of young women afterwards who had so much pride in what they did. I was holding a headset at the time and all I knew they had put that headset together. I went on to say "Qantas could have had this made in China, or by a big machine from Germany - I were speculating - but it wouldn't surprise me if a decision of principle had been made that they would support that facility in Dandenong because it is important. As I told this story, she said "I think you've got your story for tonight". She was absolutely right, and I asked if I could steal the headset from the plane! That night I told that story. These guys work for the likes of BHP Billiton, Shell, and those sorts, but I would say that everyone deserves to have an opportunity to live out their full potential, and we as a broad community have a responsibility to do our little bit, because the more we get that right, the less the take on other parts of the government. More fulfilled lives, and a better deal all round.

I'm so excited to now be able to ask you all - and I'm going to make sure we have cameras - to hold this up. You can wave at around, but as long as it is pointing to me and we are saying collectively "I count. Count us all in. We've got a lot of work to do but it is to be because to let it go."

That's a great photo, Bruce! Wow.

They love it so much that they're still filming!

(Laughter)

Thank you!

(Applause)

– END OF TRANSCRIPT.